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LECTURES ON ENGLISH LITERATURE
CHIEFLY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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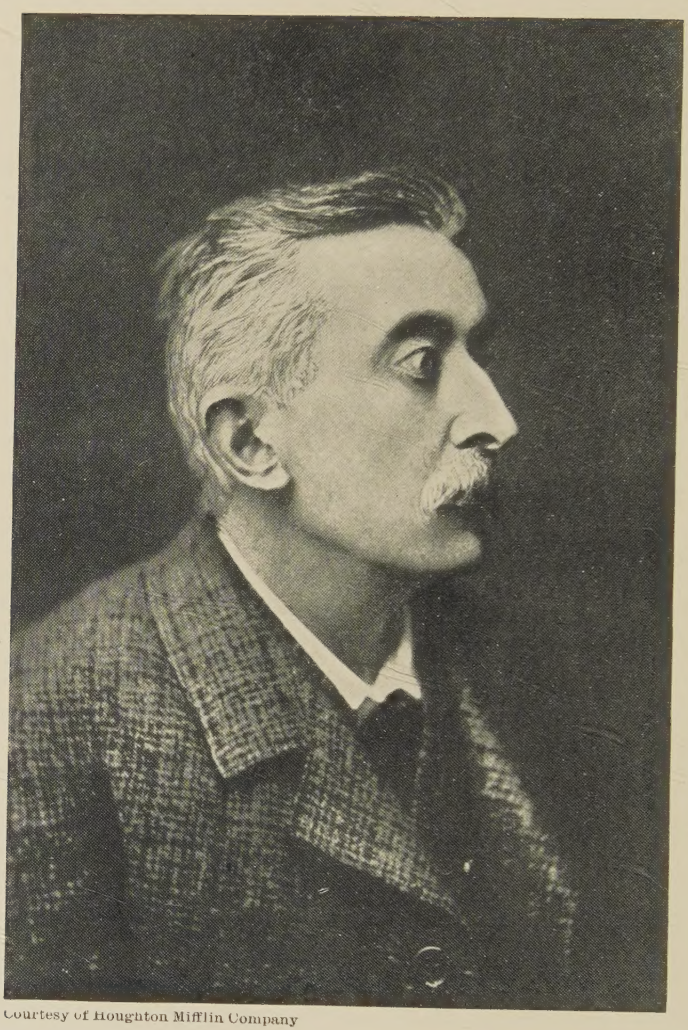

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Lafcadio Hearn

INTERPRETATIONS OF LITERATURE

BY

LAFCADIO HEARN

SELECTED AND EDITED WITH
AN INTRODUCTION BY

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With Frontispiece

VOLUME I

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WAUKESHA

INTRODUCTION

I

Lafcadio Hearn, in his books the interpreter of the Japanese genius to the western world, held the chair of English literature in the University of Tokyo from 1896 to 1902. It has not been sufficiently recognised that in his classroom for those six years he was the interpreter also of the western world to Japan. By the merest chance, it seems, our literature, and through literature our civilisation, found in this extraordinary critic and teacher such an ambassador to the mind of the Far East as we are not likely to find again. Others as well as he have explained Japan to the West, but who else has explained the West to Japan? It is with a sense, therefore, of the historical as well as of the literary importance of his lectures that this selection from them has been made.

In lecturing, Lafcadio Hearn used no notes, but for the convenience of his class, who were listening to a foreign language, he dictated slowly, and certain of his abler students managed to take down long passages, whole lectures, even a series of lectures, word for word. The names of these young men are recorded with gratitude—M. Otani, R. Tanabe, T. Ochiai, S. Uchigasaki, R. Oshikawa, S. Ibaraki, M. Kurihara, and S. Kobinata. After Lafcadio Hearn's death these students, with a devotion to his memory in which all his pupils shared, placed their notes at the disposal of Pay Director Mitchell McDonald, U. S. N., Hearn's friend and literary executor. One beautiful lecture on "Naked Poetry," from the notes of T. Ochiai, was included in the second volume of Elizabeth Bisland's "Life and Letters of

Lafcadio Hearn." Later Mr. McDonald, with the kind aid of Mrs. Martin Egan, of New York City, brought the entire mass of notes, amounting to some four or five hundred thousand words, to the attention of the present publishers.

Although all the notes were strangely interesting, not all of them, of course, were equally accurate, and it naturally occurred to the editor to choose only the most accurate for these initial volumes. The point deserves some emphasis, for a number of the omitted lectures are critically of great importance, and might well be carefully edited for publication at another time. But first it seemed fair to let Hearn speak through those reports which least needed revision. In determining, therefore, which lectures should be published in these two volumes, the editor first selected the manuscripts that could be printed with least editing, even though by this principle he had to postpone certain tantalising reports of lectures, for example, on the poetry of Scott, of Tennyson, and of Browning. From this first choice the editor further selected those lectures which seemed most admirable in themselves, either for the originality of their ideas or for their felicity as interpretations. As a result of this second selection there remained a group of chapters for the most part on English literature of the nineteenth century, and a group on miscellaneous subjects.

In editing these volumes no attempt has been made at what might be called a reconstruction of the text. Obvious slips in single words and phrases have been corrected, but passages of any elaborate difficulty have been omitted. The punctuation has been revised, and all dates, titles, and quotations have been verified—no easy task when one is on the trail of so wide a reader as Lafcadio Hearn. If there is any oversight in any of these details, the fault is to be laid to the editor and to the note-takers, not to the lecturer; and in so far as these pages are free from such oversights, the editor must share the credit with Mr. Mitchell McDonald, who has read

the proofs with great care. Should the reader be troubled by occasional repetitions in the various chapters, even by an occasional contradiction, he should remember that these are spoken words, which Lafcadio Hearn had no opportunity to revise, and which he, the scrupulous artist, would never have published as they were uttered. His friends think, however, that it is a better service to his memory and to literature to preserve these lectures in their spontaneous state than to tamper with them or to suppress them altogether.

II

In his letters Lafcadio Hearn gives us three glimpses into his life as a teacher of literature, and into his own reflections on what he accomplished. At the end of his first year at Tokyo he wrote to his friend Sentaro Nishida:

I teach only twelve hours. I have no text-books except for two classes,—one of which studies Milton's "Paradise Lost" and the other Tennyson's "Princess" (at my suggestion). I did not suggest "Paradise Lost"; but as the students wanted in different divisions of the class to study different books, [I] made them vote, and, out of seventy-eight, sixty-three voted for "Paradise Lost"! Curious! (Just because it was hard for them, I suppose.) My other classes are special, and receive lectures on special branches of English literature (such as Ballad Literature, Ancient and Modern; Victorian Literature, etc.);—the professor being left free to do as he pleases.

Two years later, in February, 1899, Lafcadio Hearn wrote to Mr. Mitchell McDonald this modest account of the lectures:

Thanks for your interest in my lecture-work; but you would be wrong in thinking the lectures worth printing. They are only dictated lectures—dictated out of my head, not from notes even: so the form of them cannot be good. Were I to rewrite each of them ten or fifteen times, I might print them. But that would not be worth while. I am not a scholar, nor a competent critic of the best; there are scores of men able to do the same thing incomparably better. The lectures are good for the Tokyo University, however,—because they have been

adapted, by long experience, to the Japanese student's way of thinking and feeling, and are put in the simplest possible language.

In September, 1902, Hearn was writing to Mr. Ellwood Hendrick as to the possibility of lecturing in America. His long letter is a kind of inventory, characteristically modest, of his accomplishment and of his abilities. One passage, which formulates his rare and beautiful ideal of the teaching of literature, the editor has put into italics:

> The main result of holding a chair of English literature for six years has been to convince me that I know very little about English literature, and never could learn very much. I have learned enough, indeed, to lecture upon the general history of English literature, without the use of notes or books; and I have been able to lecture upon the leading poets and prose-writers of the later periods. But I have not the scholarship needed for the development and exercise of the critical faculty, in the proper sense of the term. I know nothing of Anglo-Saxon: and my knowledge of the relation of English literature to other European literature is limited to the later French and English romantic and realistic periods.
>
> Under these circumstances you might well ask how I could fill my chair. The fact is that I never made any false pretences, and never applied for the post. I realised my deficiencies; but I soon felt where I might become strong, and *I taught literature as the expression of emotion and sentiment,—as the representation of life. In considering a poet I tried to explain the quality and the powers of the emotion that he produces. In short, I based my teaching altogether upon appeals to the imagination and the emotions of my pupils*,—and they have been satisfied (though the fact may signify little, because their imagination is so unlike our own).
>
> Should I attempt to lecture on literature in America, I should only follow the same lines—which are commonly held to be illegitimate, but in which I very firmly believe there are great possibilities. Subjects upon which I think that I have been partly successful are such as these:
>
> The signification of Style and Personality.
>
> Respective values of various styles. Error of the belief that one method is essentially superior to another.
>
> Psychological signification of the true Realism—as illustrated by

the Norse writers and, in modern times, by Flaubert and Maupassant. Psychological signification of Romantic methods.

Metaphysical poetry of George Meredith: illustrating the application of the Evolutional Philosophy to Ethics.

D. G. Rossetti and Christina Rossetti.

The Poetical Prose and the Poetry of Charles Kingsley.

Four great masters of modern prose: Carlyle, Ruskin, De Quincey, Froude.

The mystical element in modern lyric verse. (I use the term "mystical" in the meaning of a blending of the religious with the passional emotion.)

Of the truth and the ideal beauty in Tolstoi's Theory of Art.

"Beyond Man": a chapter upon the morality of insect-communities,—suggesting the probable lines of ethical evolution.

III

His own quiet estimate hardly does justice to the value of Lafcadio Hearn's lectures, even aside from their significance as interpretations of western literature to the East. In substance if not in form they are criticism of the finest kind, unmatched in English unless we return to the best of Coleridge, and in some ways unequalled by anything in Coleridge. Most literary criticism discusses other things than the one matter in which the writer and the reader are interested—that is, the effect of the writing upon the reader. It is hardly too severe to say that most critics talk around a poem or a story or a play, without risking a judgment on the centre of their subject; or else, like even Coleridge at times, they tell you what you ought to read into a given work, instead of showing you what is waiting there to be seen. Lafcadio Hearn is remarkable among critics for throwing a clear light on genuine literary experience—on the emotions which the books under discussion actually give us. Himself a craftsman of the first order, he wasted no time on the analysis of technique, knowing that the emotional substance of literature must become a personal and conscious possession of the reader before the discussion of technique can be profitable.

Where he seems to be analysing technique, as sometimes in the second volume of these lectures, he is still helping the student to realise the emotional experience, rather than the device that produced it.

His students, since they were orientals, must have found western emotions, or at least the western expression of them, for the most part unintelligible, and their instructor's task, therefore, was to supply them with such information and sympathy and to stimulate in them such imagination, that the gulf between their world and western feeling might be bridged over. In a way, this is only the problem of teaching literature to any students; even for American or English youth some experience must be artificially supplied before they can appreciate the expression of it in, let us say, Shakespeare or Byron or Scott. To succeed even in the most favorable circumstances the teacher of literature must have a tactful understanding of the student's limitations, as well as a passionate love of the writers he would interpret. But to succeed when the conditions are hardest, when the gulf between the student and the literature is the profound estrangement of race and civilisation!

The quotations from his letters show that Lafcadio Hearn knew he was unusual in his emphasis upon the emotional content of literature, and realised that his sympathetic knowledge of the Japanese temperament was of unique advantage in his teaching. But in another direction he probably was not aware of his sharp divergence from the Anglo-Saxon approach to English literature. Perhaps because he had the good fortune to know French and Greek literature, perhaps simply because he had a genius for broad-mindedness, he included in his definition of literature the master-pieces of historical, of philosophical, and of scientific writing. For a century English "literature" has meant to the Anglo-Saxon critic usually the works of pure emotion or pure imagination—*belles lettres*, the "literature of Power,"

in De Quincey's unfortunate distinction. The study of English "literature" in England or America has rarely meant the study of such writers as Bacon (except in the essays), Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, or Hume; and though the tradition would not ignore the fact that ideas are themselves a part of experience, and are at great crises the objects or the causes of strong emotion, yet the teacher of English literature has been content to trace revolutionary ideas in Shelley, while completely neglecting Godwin and Paine, and to expatiate on the theory of evolution in Tennyson, even in Browning (save the mark!), with no reference at all to the work of Darwin or Huxley or Tyndall. No student of French literature, however, would neglect his Descartes, nor would the classicist overlook his Democritus, his Heraclitus, his Plato, or his Aristotle. Lafcadio Hearn lectured upon English literature in Japan as we should like to see it taught in America and England,—as a total expression of racial experience, in which ideas, however abstract, often control emotions and conduct, and in which conduct and emotions often explain or modify ideas.

Even a casual reading of these lectures will suggest that Lafcadio Hearn was under a peculiar debt to the writings of Herbert Spencer, and in his letters he speaks of himself as a devoted Spencerian. Yet it was not a particular philosophy which illuminated his interpretation of books, so much as the fact that he had a philosophy at all. To have a philosophy of life is the prime requirement, if one would understand literature; for a great poem or drama is only an expression of life, and will become intelligible only as life does, when examined under the lens of experience and reason. Lafcadio Hearn's equipment here was greater than he realised. His wide contact with life and his philosophising temperament gave him a weird power to assimilate books; and though the knowledge of Anglo-Saxon might have helped him to a different historical horizon, it could hardly have improved his

insight into the universal content of art—the problems and the aspirations of living men.

Even the briefest comment on these lectures must speak of their very noble tone. Was it Lafcadio Hearn's intelligence or his temperament that flooded this unique service of his with a spirit of dignity, of largeness, of devotion to ideals? We must think it was the whole man who was speaking, an artist whose brain and heart were both great. It is not the least of our debt to him that in his classroom he illustrated day by day, before young men who might have been critical of the civilisation he represented, the noblest attitude which that civilisation has learned to take toward the things of the mind.

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Volume I

LECTURES ON ENGLISH LITERATURE CHIEFLY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER I

THE INSUPERABLE DIFFICULTY

I WISH to speak of the greatest difficulty with which the Japanese students of English literature, or of almost any western literature, have to contend. I do not think that it ever has been properly spoken about. A foreign teacher might well hesitate to speak about it—because, if he should try to explain it merely from the western point of view, he could not hope to be understood; and if he should try to speak about it from the Japanese point of view, he would be certain to make various mistakes and to utter various extravagances. The proper explanation might be given by a Japanese professor only, who should have so intimate an acquaintance with western life as to sympathise with it. Yet I fear that it would be difficult to find such a Japanese professor for this reason, that just in proportion as he should find himself in sympathy with western life, in that proportion he would become less and less able to communicate that sympathy to his students. The difficulties are so great that it has taken me many years even to partly guess how great they are. That they can be removed at the present day is utterly out of the question. But something may be gained by stating them even imperfectly. At the risk of making blunders and uttering extravagances, I shall make the attempt. I am impelled to do so by a recent conversation with one of the cleverest students that I ever had, who acknowledged his total inability to understand some of the commonest facts in western life,—all those facts relating, directly or indirectly, to the position of woman in western literature as reflecting western life.

Let us clear the ground at once by putting down some facts in the plainest and lowest terms possible. You must

try to imagine a country in which the place of the highest virtue is occupied, so to speak, by the devotion of sex to sex. The highest duty of the man is not to his father, but to his wife; and for the sake of that woman he abandons all other earthly ties, should any of these happen to interfere with that relation. The first duty of the wife may be, indeed, must be, to her child, when she has one; but otherwise her husband is her divinity and king. In that country it would be thought unnatural or strange to have one's parents living in the same house with wife or husband. You know all this. But it does not explain for you other things, much more difficult to understand, especially the influence of the abstract idea of woman upon society at large as well as upon the conduct of the individual. The devotion of man to woman does not mean at all only the devotion of husband to wife. It means actually this,—that every man is bound by conviction and by opinion to put all women before himself, simply because they are women. I do not mean that any man is likely to think of any woman as being his intellectual and physical superior; but I do mean that he is bound to think of her as something deserving and needing the help of every man. In time of danger the woman must be saved first. In time of pleasure, the woman must be given the best place. In time of hardship the woman's share of the common pain must be taken voluntarily by the man as much as possible. This is not with any view to recognition of the kindness shown. The man who assists a woman in danger is not supposed to have any claim upon her for that reason. He has done his duty only, not to her, the individual, but to womankind at large. So we have arrived at this general fact, that the first place in all things, except rule, is given to woman in western countries, and that it is given almost religiously.

Is woman a religion? Well, perhaps you will have the chance of judging for yourselves if you go to America. There you will find men treating women with just the same

respect formerly accorded only to religious dignitaries or to great nobles. Everywhere they are saluted and helped to the best places; everywhere they are treated as superior beings. Now if we find reverence, loyalty and all kinds of sacrifices devoted either to a human being or to an image, we are inclined to think of worship. And worship it is. If a western man should hear me tell you this, he would want the statement qualified, unless he happened to be a philosopher. But I am trying to put the facts before you in the way in which you can best understand them. Let me say, then, that the all important thing for the student of English literature to try to understand, is that in western countries woman is a cult, a religion, or if you like still plainer language, I shall say that in western countries woman is a god.

So much for the abstract idea of woman. Probably you will not find that particularly strange; the idea is not altogether foreign to eastern thought, and there are very extensive systems of feminine pantheism in India. Of course the western idea is only in the romantic sense a feminine pantheism; but the Oriental idea may serve to render it more comprehensive. The ideas of divine Mother and divine Creator may be studied in a thousand forms; I am now referring rather to the sentiment, to the feeling, than to the philosophical conception.

You may ask, if the idea or sentiment of divinity attaches to woman in the abstract, what about woman in the concrete —individual woman? Are women individually considered as gods? Well, that depends on how you define the word god. The following definition would cover the ground, I think:—"Gods are beings superior to man, capable of assisting or injuring him, and to be placated by sacrifice and prayer." Now according to this definition, I think that the attitude of man towards woman in western countries might be very well characterised as a sort of worship. In the upper classes of society, and in the middle classes also, great rever-

ence towards women is exacted. Men bow down before them, make all kinds of sacrifices to please them, beg for their good will and their assistance. It does not matter that this sacrifice is not in the shape of incense burning or of temple offerings; nor does it matter that the prayers are of a different kind from those pronounced in churches. There is sacrifice and worship. And no saying is more common, no truth better known, than that the man who hopes to succeed in life must be able to please the women. Every young man who goes into any kind of society knows this. It is one of the first lessons that he has to learn. Well, am I very wrong in saying that the attitude of men towards women in the West is much like the attitude of men towards gods?

But you may answer at once,—How comes it, if women are thus reverenced as you say, that men of the lower classes beat and ill-treat their wives in those countries? I must reply, for the same reason that Italian and Spanish sailors will beat and abuse the images of the saints and virgins to whom they pray, when their prayer is not granted. It is quite possible to worship an image sincerely, and to seek vengeance upon it in a moment of anger. The one feeling does not exclude the other. What in the higher classes may be a religion, in the lower classes may be only a superstition, and strange contradictions exist, side by side, in all forms of superstition. Certainly the western working man or peasant does not think about his wife or his neighbour's wife in the reverential way that the man of the superior class does. But you will find, if you talk to them, that something of the reverential idea is there; it is there at least during their best moments.

Now there is a certain exaggeration in what I have said. But that is only because of the somewhat narrow way in which I have tried to express a truth. I am anxious to give you the idea that throughout the West there exists, though with a difference according to class and culture, a sentiment about women quite as reverential as a sentiment of religion.

This is true; and not to understand it, is not to understand western literature.

How did it come into existence? Through many causes, some of which are so old that we can not know anything about them. This feeling did not belong to the Greek and Roman civilisation, but it belonged to the life of the old northern races, who have since spread over the world, planting their ideas everywhere. In the oldest Scandinavian literature you will find that women were thought of and treated by the men of the North very much as they are thought of and treated by Englishmen of to-day. You will find what their power was in the old sagas, such as the Njal-Saga, or "The Story of Burnt Njal." But we must go much further than the written literature to get a full knowledge of the origin of such a sentiment. The idea seems to have existed that woman was semi-divine, because she was the mother, the creator of man. And we know that she was credited among the Norsemen with supernatural powers. But upon this northern foundation there was built up a highly complex fabric of romantic and artistic sentiment. The Christian worship of the Virgin Mary harmonised with the northern belief. The sentiment of chivalry reinforced it. Then came the artistic resurrection of the Renaissance, and the new reverence for the beauty of the old Greek gods, and the Greek traditions of female divinities; these also coloured and lightened the old feeling about womankind. Think also of the effects with which literature, poetry and the arts have since been cultivating and developing the sentiment. Consider how the great mass of western poetry is love poetry, and the greater part of western fiction love stories.

Of course the foregoing is only the vaguest suggestion of a truth. Really my object is not to trouble you at all about the evolutional history of the sentiment, but only to ask you to think what this sentiment means in literature. I am not asking you to sympathise with it, but if you could sympathise

with it you would understand a thousand things in western books which otherwise must remain dim and strange. I am not expecting that you can sympathise with it. But it is absolutely necessary that you should understand its relation to language and literature. Therefore I have to tell you that you should try to think of it as a kind of religion, a secular, social, artistic religion, not to be confounded with any national religion. It is a kind of race feeling or race creed. It has not originated in any sensuous idea, but in some very ancient superstitious idea. Nearly all forms of the highest sentiment and the highest faith and the highest art have had their beginnings in equally humble soil.

CHAPTER II

THE QUESTION OF THE HIGHEST ART

In taking this title for the present short lecture, I have not said "literary art," but simply art. That is because I think that all the arts are so related to each other, and to some form of highest truth, that each obeys the same laws as the others, and manifests the same principles. Of course I intend to refer especially to literary art; but in order to do this effectually, I must first speak about art in general.

I take it that art signifies the emotional expression of life in some form or other. This may be expressed in music, in painting, in sculpture, in poetry, in drama, or in fiction. Truth to life is the object even of the best fiction—though the story in itself may not be true, or may even be impossible. But it has of course been said that the kinds of art are almost innumerable. The question that I want to answer is this, What is the highest form of art?

Without attempting to discuss the different kinds of art in any way, I think we may fairly assume that intellectual life represents something higher than physical life, and that ethical life represents something higher still. In short, the position of Spencer that moral beauty is far superior to intellectual beauty, ought to be a satisfactory guide to the answer of this question. If moral beauty be the very highest possible form of beauty, then the highest possible form of art should be that which expresses it.

I do not think that anybody would deny these premises from a philosophical point of view. But the mere statement that moral beauty ought to be ranked above all other beauty, and that the highest art should necessarily express moral beauty, leaves a vague and unsatisfactory impression upon the mind. It is not very easy to answer the question, How

can music or painting or sculpture or poetry or fiction represent moral beauty? And have I not often told you that books written for a moral purpose are nearly always inartistic and unsatisfactory?

It seems to me that a solution of this difficulty is at least suggested by the experience of love.

To love another human being is really a moral experience, although this fact is very commonly overlooked. You might say, That is all very fine, but how can it be a moral experience to love a bad person, or to love for sense and self? I shall answer that the selfish side of the feeling has no importance at all; and that whether the person loved be good or bad or indifferent is also of no importance. I mean that the experience is not at all affected as to its moral side by the immorality of the conditions of it. Certainly it is a great misfortune and a great folly to love a bad person; but in spite of the misfortune and the folly a certain moral experience comes, which has immense value to a wholesome nature. The experience is one which very few of the poets and philosophers dwell upon; yet it is the only important, the supremely important, part of the experience. What is it? It is the sudden impulse to unselfishness. For there are two sides to every passion of love in a normal human life. One side is selfish; the other side, and the stronger, is unselfish. In other words, one of the first results of truly loving another human being is the sudden wish to die for the sake of that person, to endure anything, to attempt anything difficult or dangerous for the benefit of the person beloved. That is what Tennyson refers to in the celebrated verse about the chord of Self suddenly disappearing. The impulse to self-sacrifice is the moral experience of loving; and this experience is not necessarily confined to the kind of affection described by Tennyson. Other forms of love may produce the same result. Strong faith may do it. Patriotism may do it. I have only mentioned the ordinary form of love, because it is the most universal experience, and most likely

to produce the moral impulse, the unselfish desire to suffer pain, to suffer loss, or even to suffer death, for the sake of a person loved.

I know that mere beauty of form may produce such emotion, though beauty of form is by no means the highest source of moral inspiration. There is a possible relation between physical and moral beauty; but it does not seem to be a relation now often realised in this imperfect world. Intellectual beauty never, I think, excites our affection—though it may excite our admiration. Moral beauty, the highest of all, has indeed been a supreme source of unselfish action; but it has moved men's minds chiefly through superhuman ideals, and very seldom through the words or acts of a person, an individual. It must be confessed that in a person we are much more ready to perceive the lower than the higher forms of beauty.

But in this we have a suggestion of possible values in regard to future art. Taking it for granted that some forms of beauty inspire men with such affection as to make them temporarily unselfish, I do not see any reason to doubt that in future very much higher forms of beauty will produce the same effect. I should say that the highest form of art must necessarily be such art as produces upon the beholder the same moral effect that the passion of love produces in a generous lover. Such art would be a revelation of moral beauty for which it were worth while to sacrifice self,—of moral ideas for which it were a beautiful thing to die. Such an art ought to fill men even with a passionate desire to give up life, pleasure, everything, for the sake of some grand and noble purpose. Just as unselfishness is the real test of strong affection, so unselfishness ought to be the real test of the very highest kind of art. Does this art make you feel generous, make you willing to sacrifice yourself, make you eager to attempt some noble undertaking? If it does, then it belongs to the higher class of art, if not to the very highest. But if a work of art, whether sculpture or

painting or poem or drama, does not make us feel kindly, more generous, morally better than we were before seeing it, then I should say that, no matter how clever, it does not belong to the highest forms of art.

By this statement I do not mean in the least to decry such art as the sculpture of the Greeks, as the painting of the Italians—not at all. The impression of great sculpture and a great painting, like the impression of grand music, *is* to make us feel more kindly to our fellowmen, more unselfish in our actions, more exalted in our aspirations. When art has not this effect, it is often because the nature of man is deficient, not because his art is bad. But I do not know that any art which has existed in the past could be called the highest possible. The highest possible ought to be, I think, one that treats of ethical ideals, not physical ideals, and of which the effect should be a purely moral enthusiasm. Sculpture, painting, music,—these arts can never, I imagine, attempt the highest art in the sense that I mean. But drama, poetry, great romance or fiction, in other words, great literature, may attempt the supreme, and very probably will do so at some future time.

CHAPTER III

ON ROMANTIC AND CLASSIC LITERATURE, IN RELATION TO STYLE

In the course of these lectures you will find me often using such words as "romantic" and "classic"—in relation either to poetry or to prose,—to expression or sentiment. And it is rather important that you should be able to keep in mind the general idea of the difference of the qualities implied by these adjectives. What is a romantic composition?—What is a classic or classical composition?

Details, explanations of these terms, I have already given in the course of other lectures, and details will not be necessary at present. It will be sufficient, quite sufficient, to remember that classic work, as regards any modern production, means work constructed according to old rules which have been learned from the classic authors of antiquity, the Greek and the Latin masters of literature. So that the very shortest possible definition of classical composition would be this: any prose or poetry written according to ancient rules, that is, ancient rhetoric. And, conversely, you might suppose romantic to mean any compositions not according to rhetoric, not according to the old rules. But this would be but partly true. Work done without regard to rules of any kind could scarcely be good literature, and European romantic literature really includes the best of almost everything in drama, in poetry, in fiction, and even in the essay. There have been rules observed, of course; when I tell you that Tennyson was romantic quite as much as Shakespeare was, you will see that absence of law does not signify romanticism.

To define exactly what is romantic in literature, would require a very exact understanding of what was up to our

own time considered classic in English literature; for romantic work has always been neither more nor less than a justifiable departure from the observance of accepted literary conventions. And to explain these conventions fully you would find a very tiresome undertaking—involving much lecturing about rhetorical forms and their origins. A better way to clear the field will be to define the romantic position thus:

It is right and artistic to choose whatever form of literary expression an author may prefer, provided only that the form be beautiful and correct.

The classical position represented extreme conservatism in literature, and might be thus put into a few words:

You have no right whatever to choose your own forms of literary expression, either in poetry or in prose. Experience has proved that the forms which we prescribe are the best, and whatever you have to say must be said according to our rules. If you do not obey those rules, you will be inflicting an injury upon your native language and your native literature; and for such an injury you cannot be forgiven.

The great mistake which the champions of classical feeling made in England, and indeed throughout modern Europe, was the mistake of considering language as something fixed and perfected, completely evolved. If any modern European languages were really perfect, or even so nearly perfect as the old Greek language has been, then indeed there might be some good reason for conservative rules. After any language has reached its perfect period, then it is threatened with decay from exterior sources; and at such a time measures may be taken with good reason to check such decay. But all European languages are still in the process of growth, of development, of evolution. To check that growth would have been the inevitable result of a triumph of classicism. You must imagine the classicist as saying to the romanticist, "Do not try to do anything new, because you cannot do anything better than what has already been done."

And the romanticist answers, "What you want is to stop all progress. I know that I can do better, and I am going to do it, in my own way." Of course the same literary division is to be found in every country, however little, whether of Europe or of the East. There will always be the conservative party, anxious to preserve the traditions of the past, and dreading every change that can affect those traditions—because it loves them, recognising their beauty, and cannot believe that anything new could ever be quite so beautiful and useful. And everywhere there must be the romantic element, young, energetic, impatient of restraint, and all-confident of being able to do something much better than ever was done before. Strange as it may seem, it is only out of the quarrelling between these conflicting schools that any literary progress can grow.

Before going further, permit me to say something in opposition to a very famous Latin proverb,—Medio tutissimus ibis—"Thou wilt go most safely by taking the middle course."

In speaking of two distinct tendencies in literature, you might expect me to say that the aim of the student should be to avoid extremes, and to try not to be either too conservative or too liberal. But I should certainly never give you any such advice. On the contrary, I think that the proverb above quoted is one of the most mischievous, one of the most pernicious, one of the most foolish that ever was invented in this world. I believe very strongly in extremes, in violent extremes, and I am quite sure that all progress in this world, whether literary, or scientific, or religious, or political, has been obtained only with the assistance of extremes. But remember that I say "with the assistance of" —so I do not mean that extremes alone accomplish the end; there must be antagonism, but there must be also conservatism. What I mean by finding fault with the proverb is simply this,—that it is very bad advice for a young man. To give a young man such advice is very much like telling

him not to do his best, but to do only half best,—in other words, to be half-hearted in his undertakings!

An old man with experience certainly learns how to take a middle course through conviction and knowledge, not through prudence or caution. But this is practically impossible for the average young man to do with sincerity to himself. Without experience you cannot expect him to master strong prejudices, great loves and hates, admirations, repulsions. The old man can master all these, because he has had the practical opportunity of studying most questions from a hundred different sides. And also he has learned patience in a degree impossible to youth. And it is not the old men who ever prove great reformers; they are too cautious, too wise. Reforms are made by the vigour and the courage and the self-sacrifice and the emotional conviction of young men, who do not know enough to be afraid, and who feel much more deeply than they think. Indeed, great reforms are not accomplished by reasoning, but by feeling. And therefore I should say that nothing ought to be more an object with young scholars than the cultivation of their best feelings; for feelings are more important in their future career than cold reasoning. It is rather a good sign for the young man to be a little imprudent, a little extravagant, a little violent, in his way of thinking and speaking about those subjects in which he is most profoundly interested; and I should say that a young man who has no prejudice, no strong opinion, is not really a vigorous person either in mind or in body. Too much of the middle course is a bad sign.

And now let us apply the principle indicated, to literature. Literature is a subject upon which a young man of education should feel very strongly. Ought he to be a conservative, a classicist? Ought he to be a liberal, a romanticist? I should answer that it does not matter at all which he may happen to be; but he certainly ought to put himself upon one side or the other, and not to try anything so half-hearted as

to take a middle course. No middle course policy ever accomplished anything for literature, and never will accomplish anything. But conservatism has done very much; and liberalism has done still more; and they have done it by their continual contest for supremacy. In the end this contest is that which makes the true and valuable middle course. But no middle course—I mean, no system ever combining the best qualities of the two schools—could have grown out of a middle course policy, which simply means a state of comparative inaction.

As for the question, ought I to be romantic or conservative?—that can best be answered by one's own heart. How do you feel upon the matter? If you have a sincere admiration for the romantic side of literature, and sincere faith in its principles, then it is your duty to be romantic. If, on the other hand, you can feel more strongly the severe beauty of classic methods, and perceive the advantage to national literature of classic rules,—then it is your duty to be as classical as you can. In the course of time you will find that larger experience will make you much more tolerant, in either direction; but at the outset, it is much better to join one of the two camps. And you can do so with the full conviction that you will be serving literature, whichever side you sincerely espouse.

You know that in a steam engine there is a part of the machinery designed to check speed,—to prevent the structure from operating too rapidly. Without this governing apparatus, a steam engine would quickly break itself to pieces. Now, conservatism, classicism, has acted exactly in the way suggested. It has prevented changes from being too quickly made. It has prevented the machinery of literature from breaking to pieces. On the other hand, it could accomplish by itself very little good. As I said before, a long period of classic domination would mean literary stagnation. This is the story of conservatism in every European literature. Whenever it became supremely powerful, litera-

ture began to decay or to grow barren. But on the other hand the romantic tendency unchecked also leads to literary decadence. At first the romantic principle of liberty is exercised only within comparatively narrow limits. Presently, however, the more impatient and unsubmissive party in the liberals desire to break down even the rules which they once hoped to maintain. Still later a violation of all rules is likely to become a temporary fashion. Eventually the nation, the public, become disgusted with the result, and a strong reaction sets in, putting the classical party into supreme power again. This tendency is very well exemplified by the present history of literature in France,—where a reaction has been provoked by the excesses of literary liberalism. In England also there are signs that a classic reaction is coming. Prose has decayed; poetry is almost silent; and when we find a decay of prose and a comparative silence of poetry, past experience assures us that a classical reaction is likely.

But when classicism returns after a long period of romantic triumph, it never returns in exactly the same form. After reinstatement, the classic spirit invariably proves to have gained a great deal by its last defeat. It returns as a generous conqueror—more liberal, more enterprising, more sympathetic than before. Again it exercises restraint upon choice of forms and modes of sentiment, but not the same restraint as formerly. So, too, we find romanticism gaining strength by each defeat. When it obtains control again after an interval of classic rule, it proves itself to have learned not a little from its previous mistakes; it is apt to be less extravagant, less aggressive, less indifferent to race-experience than before. In other words, every alternation of the literary battle seems to result in making the romantic spirit more classic, and the classic spirit more romantic. Each learns from the other by opposing it.

What I have thus far said, relates especially to European literature; and I am much too ignorant of Japanese

literature to speak to you about it with any attempt at detail. But I may venture some general remarks justified by such inferences as may be drawn from the past history of literature in other countries. Whether there has been a true romantic movement in Japanese literature, I do not even know; but I am quite sure that such a movement must take place sooner or later in the future, and that not once, but many times. I imagine that the movement would especially take the form of a revolt against the obligation of writing in the written language only, and perhaps against fixed forms and rules of poetical composition. I am quite sure that a revolt of some kind must happen,—that is, in the event of any great literary progress. And it is proper here that I should state how my sympathies lie in regard to European literature,—they are altogether romantic. The classical tendencies I think of as painfully necessary; but I have never been able to feel any sympathy whatever with modern classical literature in the strict sense of the word. Consequently, as regards any departure in future Japanese literature, I should naturally hope for a romantic triumph. I should like to hear of the breaking down of many old rules, and the establishment of many new ones. I should like to hear of some great scholar not afraid to write a great book in the language of the common people; and I should like to hear of attempts in the direction of the true epic and of the great romance in some new form of Japanese poetry. But, having said thus much, I only mean to express my frank sympathies. As to the question whether one should attempt or should not attempt a new departure in Japanese literature, there is very much to be said. Before anybody attempts to make a great change, it were well that he should be able to correctly estimate his own strength.

Suppose that we take, for example, the subject of writing in the colloquial language—let us say a great novel, a great drama, or a great work of a didactic description. It

seems to me that the first question to ask oneself, as to the advisability of using the popular instead of the literary language, should be this:—"Am I able, by using the colloquial, to obtain much greater and better effects than I can by following the usual method?" If any young author, who has had a university training, can ask himself that question, and honestly answer it in the affirmative, then I think it would be his duty to throw aside the old form and attempt to do something quite new. But unless a man is certain of being able to accomplish more in this way than he could accomplish in any other way, I should not encourage him to work in a new direction. The only reason for making great changes in any art is the certainty of improvement,—the conviction of new power to be gained. To attempt something new only with the result of producing inferior work were a very serious mistake, because such a mistake would react against the whole liberal movement, the whole tendency to healthy change. But if you have at any time a strong conviction that by breaking old rules you can effect new things of great worth, then it would be your duty without fearing any consequence to break the rules.

In Europe every romantic triumph has been achieved at a very considerable cost. Literature, like religion, like patriotism, must have its martyrs. Men must be ready to sacrifice their personal interests in order to bring about any great changes for the better. Immense forces have always been marshalled on the classic side in modern Europe. For example, first, the universities, which represent a tremendous power. Secondly, the religious element; for religion has always been necessarily conservative in Europe; and on the subject of literature, this conservatism has not been without good cause. And thirdly, I may remark that the nobility, the aristocracy, even the upper middle classes, have generally given their support to literary as well as to other kinds of conservatism.

And you can scarcely imagine what power, in a country

like England, was formerly represented by the universities, the Church, and society. It really required extraordinary courage to oppose the judgment of these, even in so small a matter as literary style. I do not know whether in this country a literary innovator would have any corresponding opposition; but I am led to suppose that there is a very considerable strength of conservatism still ruling certain departments of Japanese literature, because I have been told, when urging that certain things might be done with good results, that these things were contrary to custom. The fact itself would not be, I think, a sufficient reason for attempting nothing new. The super-excellent, the rare, the best of anything, is nearly always in some sort contrary to custom. But it is true that only the men of force, the giants, should break the customs. And that is why I believe that a conservatism like that of the English has been of very great value to literature in the past. The opposition which it offered to change was so great that only the most extraordinary man dared to break through. It is not an excuse to break a rule, that the rule is difficult to follow or tiresome to obey. As I have already said, it seems to me that a young man's convictions ought to make him either a conservative or a liberal in literature,—that he ought to be naturally either classical or romantic. But in declaring this, I do not mean that any one would be justified in following his literary tendencies to the extent of breaking rules merely for the production of inferior work. One may be romantic, for example, by taste, by sympathy, by feeling, without producing anything of which the evident weakness would not disgrace the school he represents.

And now I want to say something about western styles as represented by romantic and classic writers. According to the rules of classic rhetoric, style, to be cultivated, ought to be more or less uniform. Rules having been established for the construction and the proportion and the position of every part of a sentence, as well as of every part of a

verse, one would presume that all who perfectly mastered and obeyed these rules would write in exactly the same way,—so that you could not tell the style of one man from the style of another.

If all men's minds were exactly alike, and all had studied classic rules, this would have really been the case throughout Europe at different periods of literary history. In the English classic age—I might say during the greater part of the eighteenth century, such uniformity did actually obtain that we find it hard to distinguish the work of one writer from that of another, if we do not know the name of the author or the name of the book. Thousands and thousands of pages of prose were then produced by different men,—each page as much resembling every other as one egg or one pea might resemble all other eggs or all other peas; it also was so in poetry. Among the school of poets who used in that time the heroic couplet—that is, the rhymed ten syllable lines that Pope made fashionable—it requires a very clever critic to distinguish the work of one man from the work of another merely by studying the text itself.

I think that in France the results of classical uniformity became even more marked. Without a good deal of preliminary study you would find the work of the French classic poets very much alike in the use of the alexandrine—a verse as tiresome and as artificial as the heroic couplet of Pope. But the French prose of the classic age is much more uniform than the poetry—and much more uniform than English prose ever could be, for the English is less perfect than the French, and therefore less subject to the discipline of fixed rules. But you might take half a dozen pages of French prose written by each of fifty different authors, and you would find it very hard to distinguish one style from another. I do not mean to say that style does not exist in the personal sense. It does exist; but the differences are so fine, so delicate, that to the common reader there is no difference at all.

However, even under the severest discipline of classic rules, what we call style can always be detected by a trained critic. This is simply because there is something in the mind of each man so very different from that which is in the mind of every other man, that no two men could ever obey the same rule in exactly the same way. The judgment of each, the feeling of each, would move in a slightly different direction from every other. In the classic sense, strictly speaking, style has only the meaning of obedience to general rules, correctness, exactitude. But in the romantic sense, this has nothing to do with style. To the romantic comprehension of style as we understand the term to-day, it was the particular differences by which the writing of one man could be distinguished from the writing of another that really signified. And in our own day literary style means personal character—means the individual quality of feeling which distinguishes every author's work. The romantic tendency is to accentuate and expand such differences, such individual characteristics; the tendency of classical discipline is to suppress them—at least to suppress them as much as possible. From this fact I think you will perceive one signification of romanticism,—one character of it which should command our utmost respect. Romanticism aims to develop personality; consciously or unconsciously the object of every school of romanticism has been to develop the individual, rather than to develop any general power of literary expression. Conservatism represses the individual as much as possible; and all classic schools in Europe have endeavoured to cultivate or maintain a general type of literary excellence at the expense of the individual.

So the question resolves itself into the question of Personality in literature. What is personality? It is that particular quality of character which makes each man or woman in this world different from all other men or women in the world. Individuality only means separateness; personality means very much more—all the distinctions in hu-

man nature of an emotional or an intellectual kind belong to personality. In the lowest ranks of life you find that the people are very much alike in their habits, thoughts, and emotions. Really there are personal differences, but they are not very strong. We say of these classes that personality has not much developed among them. Higher up the differences become much more definite and visible. In the intellectual classes personality develops to such a degree that uniformity of opinion is out of the question; here each man thinks and acts and feels differently from most of the rest. We can go still higher. In such classes of select minds as are represented by professional philosophy, professional science, not to speak of art and music, the differences of personality are so great that you will not find any two professors of the same subject thinking in exactly the same way, and unity of opinion, upon any subject, becomes extremely difficult among them.

We therefore come to the conclusion that personality especially belongs to the higher ranges of intellectual culture and of emotional sensibility. I need not insist upon its importance to literature. The classic school has always championed impersonality; the romantic school has always been the highest expression of personality. And this is the reason why I think that it is quite legitimate to express my own preference and sympathy for the romantic tradition. It was this tradition which really produced every great change for the better in every literature. It was the school of Personality; and Personality in its highest forms, signifies Genius. Out of all the glorious names on the roll of European literature you will find that the vast majority are names of romanticists. I do not deny that there are some great English names and French names and German names representing classicism. But the romantic names only take the very highest rank in the history of these literatures. I might cite fifty names by way of illustration; but I imagine this would be unnecessary. Let me only remind you of

what the nineteenth century represents in English literature. There is not a single poet of importance in it belonging to the classic school in the real sense of the word. The first group of great poets are all of them romantic,—Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey; Byron (classical in form at times, yet altogether romantic in feeling and expression), Shelley, and Keats; Tennyson, Swinburne, Rossetti, Browning,—even Matthew Arnold, in spite of classical training, yielded to romantic tendencies. Or go back to the eighteenth century—the very age of classicism. There you have indeed two great classic figures in poetry, Dryden and Pope; but I should doubt very much whether these could justly be estimated at the level of Gray, Cowper, Burns, or in some respects of Blake. And a greater poetical influence than any of the classical school really wielded was exerted in the close of the century by the work of Scott, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. Even among the writers of the early part of the nineteenth century the only poet of classical sympathies, Byron, is the only poet whose work seems likely to disappear from memory; and whatever of it may survive is certainly that part which shows least sympathy with classic tradition of any sort.

On the other hand, though the romantic spirit has produced almost all the great marvels of English literature, from Shakespeare onwards, and although there appears every possible reason for giving all our sympathies to it, since it represents supreme genius in its highest expression, it certainly has its dangers. The great genius can afford to dispense with any discipline which impedes its activity; it can be excused for the breaking of the rules, because it has something better to give in return for what it breaks. But not every man is a genius; half a dozen men out of a million represent perhaps the proportion. So that a great multitude of writers, without genius, even without marked ability of any kind, may do much mischief by following the example of genius in breaking rules, without being able to

atone for this temerity by producing anything of a respectable order. The fact is that thousands of young men in Europe want to be romantic merely because romanticism represents for them the direction of least resistance. Even to do anything according to classical rules requires considerable literary training and literary patience. And these men forget that the great romantics have mostly been men, who, although breakers of rule, could make new rules of their own. I mean that in Europe at present, both in France and in England, the romantic tendency is to throw all rules aside without reason, and without good results. The persons who wish to do this, mistake romance for self-license, and they can only succeed in bringing about a general degradation of literature. As that comes, it will evidently be almost a duty of every lover of good literature to help a classic reaction—because a classic reaction is the only possible remedy for literary decadence through license. On the other hand a romantic reaction is the only possible remedy when too much classic discipline has brought about a petrifaction or stagnation of literary utterance of emotion—as happened in the middle of the eighteenth century. So you will see that the same man might very consistently be at one period of his life in favour of classicism, and at another in favour of romanticism. You will understand clearly hereafter what is meant by those terms in a general way. And as for what they signify in the literature of your own country, you are much more competent to judge than I.

CHAPTER IV

NOTE ON CRABBE

NOTWITHSTANDING the great variety of Crabbe's subjects, there is very little variety in his method of treating them, and a few examples will serve just as well as a hundred. This is a literary fact characteristic of nearly all realistic art. Wherever you find realism—true realism—you will find little or no variety in style. Style is then reduced to its simplest possible expression, because the author must never suffer himself to become personal,—and, as I have told you long ago, style is personality. Style expresses each man's way of feeling and thinking, each man's conception of the music and beauty of language—necessarily different from every other man's way of feeling, because there are no two human beings who can think and feel exactly alike. So every different style is the expression of some difference in character. But the object of the realist is never to express his own character or feeling in any way, but to represent things, exactly as they are. Whatever style he has, can be little marked by those qualities which color and make melodious the prose or poetry of romanticism. And he must always write in pretty much the same way, because his object requires no help in the way of ornament. I suppose that among modern writers—I mean writers of our own time—the most perfect examples of realistic art are furnished by the short stories of the great French *conteur*, Guy de Maupassant. Now in the hundred and fifty-odd stories which he has written, there is no variety of style whatever, no departure from the severest possible simplicity of expression. When he made a voyage to Africa, however, he displayed astonishing qualities of style in his little book entitled "Au Desert." But the traveller ceased to be the

realist. He thought that the realistic method was the best for the portraiture of human life, but that, when he had to describe seas of sand, and naked rocks, and burning sunshine, and oases, then he needed the art of the word-painter, the art of the romantic. So he described nature, in that one book only, by the romantic method. Perhaps Crabbe might have attempted something brilliant if he had travelled a little. But he was no traveller; he described only human life and its immediate surroundings in his own neighbourhood, and he tried to describe these exactly as he saw them. He is a pure realist; he has no variety of style, and such variety would have been of no use to him. Thus a few examples of his method will serve us—though I believe that we would privately find not a little pleasure in reading the whole of his poems from beginning to end. The more one reads him, the more one likes him, notwithstanding the fact that it is impossible to like the horrible subject which he often chooses. What we like in him is his great force and truth, and his surpassing pithiness of expression.

Let us begin with a few extracts from one of his earlier compositions, "The Village," said to have been revised by Dr. Johnson. What do you think of this early protest against the artificial poetry of Crabbe's own time? He complains that poets have been foolishly writing about the joys of country life, the romance of peasant love, and the innocent charm of country girls—all of which, he declares, is utter nonsense. And he proceeds to tell the truth roughly:

> Fled are those times, when, in harmonious strains,
> The rustic poet praised his native plains:
> No shepherds now, in smooth alternate verse,
> Their country's beauty or their nymphs' rehearse.
> Yet still for these we frame the tender strain,
> Still in our lays fond Corydons complain,
> And shepherds' boys their amorous pains reveal,
> The only pains, alas! they never feel.

How much bitterness of meaning in that last line!—the assertion that the only pains which the modern shepherd does not feel are the pains of love! Of course the writer refers to those English poets who were still composing English imitations of Theocritus or Virgil, and it must be confessed that his protest was much needed. Let us hear him a little further:

> Yes, thus the Muses sing of happy swains,
> Because the Muses never knew their pains:
> They boast their peasants' pipes, but peasants now
> Resign their pipes and plod behind the plough;
> And few, among the rural tribe, have time
> To number syllables, and play with rhyme.
> . . . . . .
> I grant indeed that fields and flocks have charms
> For him that grazes or for him that farms,
> But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
> The poor laborious natives of the place,
> And see the mid-day sun with fervid ray
> On their bare heads and dewy temples play;
> While some, with feebler heads and fainter hearts,
> Deplore their fortune, yet sustain their parts—
> Then shall I dare these real ills to hide
> In tinsel trappings of poetic pride?

And he goes on to picture, in all its naked misery, the cottage of the poor farm labourer, the dirt, the misery, the disease—the country girl, once pretty, then seduced by some heartless rascal, and abandoned; the exceeding strain of the labour exacted in the fields, and the exhausted state of the men and women at night; the rapid decay of strength among them, their total inability to save any money, and the hopelessness of their old age, when they are too weak to work any more and have to be supported by public charity. Then he describes the poorhouse:

> Theirs is yon house that holds the parish poor,
> Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
> There, where the putrid vapours, flagging, play,
> And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day;—

There children dwell who know no parents' care;
Parents, who know no children's love, dwell there!
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives, and mothers never wed;
Dejected widows with unheeded tears,
And crippled age with more than childhood fears;
The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they!
The moping idiot, and the madman gay.

How hideous the picture framed within those twelve lines! One can almost smell the stench, and hear the dreary humming of the spinning wheel,—for these miserable people, though supported by charity, are obliged by law to work at something, and they can either pick flax or spin thread or make rope. And when these miserable people die, even the clergyman of the parish reluctantly affords them the last consolation of religion. What kind of clergyman!—

A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday's task
As much as God or man can fairly ask;
The rest he gives to loves and labours light,
To fields the morning, and to feasts the night;
None better skilled the noisy pack to guide,
To urge their chase, to cheer them or to chide;
A sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day,
And, skilled at whist, devotes the night to play:
Then, while such honours bloom around his head,
Shall he sit sadly by the sick man's bed,
To raise the hope he feels not, or with zeal
To combat fears that e'en the pious feel?

Remember that it was a clergyman who wrote this—a country clergyman, and a very good pastor. Probably Crabbe did not exaggerate matters in the least; the lives of many country clergymen were then just as he described them. Are they very different to-day? I doubt whether they are in relation to the poorer classes, who are still separated from the clergyman by social distinctions of extraordinary depth. And not long ago I read in even so respectable a paper as

the *Spectator* that a young clergyman found it necessary to resign a position given to him in the country because he was not skilful at playing cricket! Could there be a better proof that the business of the clergyman in the country is less to help the peasant than to amuse the rich proprietor of the land?

But this does not mean that Crabbe denied the existence of moral beauty in peasant life,—not at all. He denied only the existence of romance. He told the world truthfully that the existence of the English peasant is an existence of unceasing misery from birth to death, and he suggested that instead of writing silly poetry about country life in imitation of Virgil and others, it would be more sensible to do something toward the amelioration of the peasant's condition. He himself did all that he could, for he was a sincere clergyman, keeping for himself barely enough money for the necessities of life, and freely giving the rest to the poor about him. With intense pain and regret did he behold the misery of the country people, and yet he could feel little hope of improving their condition, for all the society about him appeared to be selfish, hard and hypocritical. He really saw things as they were, but only as a good man sees them. He saw how life began in the schools, and in the existence even of the children he could discern those developments of character that made possible the condition he deplored. He wrote just as terribly about the schools as he wrote about the poorhouse,—beginning with infant schools, then portraying the school for boys, which would correspond to our elementary school, then studying the school for girls, and the schools for the children of rich men —the boarding schools. His sketches of the life in boarding schools are quite as remarkably true to-day as they were a hundred years ago. You can judge the sketches of character for yourselves, even though they may not resemble anything known to Japanese student life.

First we have a picture of the avaricious boy, the student in whom the mean elements of character are just beginning to show themselves.

> Lo! one who walks apart, although so young,
> He lays restraint upon his eyes and tongue;
> Nor will he into scrapes or dangers get,
> And half the school are in the stripling's debt.
> Suspicious, timid, he is much afraid
> Of trick and plot;—he dreads to be betrayed:
> He shuns all friendship, for he finds they lend,
> When lads begin to call each other friend:
> Yet self with self has war; the tempting sight
> Of fruit on sale provokes his appetite—

And the poet follows that with a description of the boy's inward struggle as to whether he shall buy the fruit or not. He dreads to spend so much money, though he is rich; on the other hand, being naturally greedy, he cannot deny himself the pleasure. Perhaps that is the ugliest study of character in the series, but the series includes quite a variety. I believe that there are no bullies in Japanese common schools; the general opinion of the boys would not tolerate it. In this country a number of little boys would assemble together, and make it quite impossible for a bully. But in English schools, from very ancient times the bully has been a familiar figure. In the great public schools bullying is regulated though not suppressed; you can understand a great deal about it by reading "Tom Brown's School Days." This is the way that Crabbe describes the bully of a hundred years ago:

> Unlike to him the tyrant boy, whose sway
> All hearts acknowledge; him the crowds obey:
> At his command they break through every rule;
> Whoever governs, he controls the school:
> 'Tis not the distant emperor moves his fear,
> But the proud viceroy who is ever near.

Here follows a little moral dissertation on the evil effects of fear inspired in young boys. They not only lose their

natural courage because of this treatment, but they lose their moral courage as well, and in after life their most serious faults and moral weaknesses may often be traced back to the injury done them by bullying at school. Here is an illustration of the way in which bullying is done; and I believe that there is very little change since the time when Crabbe wrote:

> Hark! at his word the trembling younglings flee,
> Where he is walking none must walk but he;
> See! from the winter-fire the weak retreat,
> His the warm corner, his the favourite seat,
> Save when he yields it to some slave to keep
> Awhile, then back, at his return, to creep:
> At his command his poor dependants fly,
> And humbly bribe him as a proud ally;
> Flattered by all, the notice he bestows
> Is gross abuse, and bantering and blows;
> Yet he's a dunce, and, spite of all his fame
> Without the desk, within he feels his shame:
> For there the weaker boy, who felt his scorn,
> For him corrects the blunders of the morn.
> And he is taught, unpleasant truth! to find
> The trembling body has the prouder mind.

It is alleged by English experience that it is very good to allow this bullying at school, because the school is a preparation for the struggle of life, and by the disagreeable side of school life boys are well prepared to fight their way through existence. You have read, no doubt, the statement of a great English general to the effect that the battles of England were really won in the playgrounds of Eton and other public schools—meaning, that it was in school that the English officers learned the art of skilful and obstinate fighting, as well as the art of controlling men. You have also read, I suppose, the very different criticism of Mr. Spencer. But as a matter of fact, even granting that the cruelty of English school life is a good preparation for the soldier, no human being can prove it to be a good prepara-

tion for those gentle and sensitive natures destined to become the thinkers, the poets, the authors of their country. Presently in our course of lectures upon the history of literature we shall have occasion to consider the case of Shelley. Shelley's great mistakes in life were undoubtedly due in part, if not altogether, to the cruelties of the public school, which disgusted him for the rest of his life with every kind of restraint, whether moral or otherwise.

You will notice in the two quotations here given that Crabbe does something which Pope never does: he overlaps. There are four overlappings in the few lines quoted; and this makes Crabbe much more agreeable to read than Pope. Also, observe that he constantly varies the position of his pause. Less polished workman than Pope, he has far more intrinsic strength, and he represents a distinct advance in classical verse—an advance toward romantic freedom.

If you want to read Crabbe—and it is well worth your while to read him—I advise you to begin with "The Tales." These are later work, but if you like them, you will like the whole book in spite of its painful character. One of the reasons that you will like it is the remarkable observation of human nature everywhere shown. There are just twenty-one tales, not all equally good. I shall speak of those which seem to me the best.

Perhaps the prettiest in parts is "Jesse and Colin," but I should advise you rather to begin with "The Frank Courtship." This is the best study of character in the whole work, voluminous and varied as that work is. The scene is laid in a Puritan family, or at least in a family with Puritan tendencies. We have, first, a portrait of the stern father, Jonas, who in twenty years never smiles, cares only to be obeyed, keeps his wife continually trembling, yet is not consciously cruel or unloving, but strictly honourable, just so far as he knows how to be, and rigidly religious. A little daughter is born to this terrible man, and he loves her in his own undemonstrative way, thinking it necessary to

be very stern with her while she is still a child. The time comes to send her to school, and he sends her to a boarding school, where she is able to associate with girls of higher rank, to learn the ways of society, and learn how to dress and—what is more dangerous—how to dream. When she leaves the school her dreams of the future are encouraged, rather than suppressed, by a proud aunt with whom she is allowed to live for a time. The father hears that she is very beautiful, very graceful, very fond of society; and he is at once scandalised and alarmed. What, his daughter becoming worldly! He at once writes her a letter telling her to come home and get married. When she comes home the father is amazed by two things, her beauty and her strong character. The first pleases him, the second makes him uneasy. The girl is not submissive at all; she has inherited her father's iron will, and she does not fear to oppose him. Indeed, she bravely tells him that she will not marry any religious, hypocritical ill-natured man merely because her father wishes it. At this point of the story we become very much interested, anticipating some tragical quarrel between father and daughter. But the poet has a beautiful surprise for us.

The father knows that his daughter must be treated gently like a spirited horse that will not bear ill treatment. But he is afraid that she will not take the husband he has chosen for her. The chosen is a very handsome young country man of exemplary life and character, but a little stern and cold. Will the girl take him? If she will, all is well; if she refuses, he cannot forgive her. He is very much afraid of the result. He takes the young man aside and whispers to him, "Try to make her ashamed and afraid the first time that you see her; if you try to flatter her, she will never have you." The young man answers, "I feel afraid myself, but I shall try to follow your instruction." Then the father brings the young man into the room where the girl is sitting, introduces him, and leaves them alone. They

both look each other steadily in the eyes; that one look decides the whole matter, for nature arranges these things quite independently of the wishes of the fathers and mothers. The man thinks the girl one of the most beautiful women that he ever saw, and he also sees that she is good and pure, though very self willed. She sees in the same moment that he is strong, grave, handsome, and sincerely good, but proud, and a little affected. The conversation begins with irony, and ends with some sharp words. The man is cautious, but he hints that the young girl is too fond of being admired, and likes to dress too well. She answers that she has no doubt of his virtuous intentions, but that he is something of a hypocrite—wants to appear a little better than he really is, and dresses plainly only to make people think him religious and simple. He answers gently, "But surely you can allow something for custom and convention"—which means that she has won the first battle. "Certainly," she answers, "I can allow many things, but please to observe that I shall exact the same kind of allowance in return." Then she dismisses him, very humble, and very much in love —but she herself secretly liking him. The father and mother are all grief. What is to be done? The father does not know that nature has settled the whole matter. "What!" he cries to his daughter, "you have dismissed him!" "Certainly," she says in answer, "but I think that he will come again." "Then do you like him?" the father asks, in surprise. "I do not dislike him," she answers smilingly, and she teases her father with enigmatic answers until he is on the verge of a passion. At last he asks, stamping his foot on the ground, "Will you marry him or not?" and she replies with an amused laugh, "Of course I will marry him." The poet has led us to the very edge of trouble, and then suddenly has brought us into quiet sunshine. And we know while reading these things, that it is all true, that he has seen it; that is why we find our emotion strongly moved by the picture of a Puritan courtship a hundred years

ago. There is not one word of comment or explanation, nothing but a plain narrative, yet from this narrative we become most intimately acquainted with four distinct characters, all of whom we find interesting, though perhaps only the girl is at all sympathetic, and even she not very much so. That is realistic art—to make you interested in things as they are, whether ugly or beautiful; and Crabbe was a great realist. If you will read that little romance in verse, it will give you, I think, a better idea of Crabbe than anything else which he has written. But there are twenty-one such stories, and a much larger number of realistic studies of country life, studies of personal observation. Crabbe painted all that he saw and painted it so perfectly that it is just as much alive to-day as it was in the time when he saw it.

There is a literary moral to be found in the history of Crabbe. How many of us who write want to write only about the things that please? Thousands of people of real literary abilities will keep waiting years and years, for what they call "a good subject," a new idea, an interesting plot, a noble fact. And life goes by,—and they scarcely do anything, or do so little that it is scarcely worth the doing. How differently did Crabbe act! He did not like at all the conditions among which he was obliged to live and work. His surroundings were full of vulgarity and pain. Everywhere he found himself confronted by what Carlyle has so well called "the brutality of facts." But he recognised that all this was life—that it was necessary—that it could not be helped—that it might be of great use to record it in literature, artistically, truthfully and dispassionately. And he became a great artist only by writing about the things that he did not like, the things that he detested. Nor did he write of them in the tone of one who detests. Nowhere through all his work will you find him expressing his own opinions, his likes and dislikes, his prejudices or his pleasures. He took the proper position of the realist, saying

to himself, "What has the world to do with my personal liking or hatred? Of what possible value could they be? My business is simply to make pictures of life, and to do so without putting myself into the pictures at all." If anybody of talent chooses to follow Crabbe's example in this country, he can find literary material all about him, just as much in what he dislikes as in what he likes. But to work in this way certainly requires more than self-denial; it requires immense force of character.

CHAPTER V

NOTES ON COWPER

In a very intimate way Cowper is related in literature to Crabbe; and he is, in certain ways, quite as interesting. I want to give you a little lecture about him just because he is so little known and so little studied in Japan. There are several reasons for this, but none of them good reasons. Perhaps the best reason is that Cowper has been latterly neglected in England, and there is a tendency in Japan to estimate him by the standard of foreign thinkers, by contemporary foreign judgment; this is an unfortunate tendency, but it cannot be helped at the present time. Another reason may be found in Cowper's religion, his eccentricities —in the general comprehension of the fact that he was almost fanatically religious, and therefore sometimes tiresome enough to the student who wants poetry in the true state. However, as I said, none of the reasons for our indifference to Cowper are good reasons. His religion no more spoils his poetry at its best than the religion of Wordsworth spoiled "The Excursion." As for power of natural description, he is very valuable to compare either with Wordsworth or with Thomson; and he has a peculiar flavour, different from either. He is almost as much a realist as Crabbe, but in another way. Crabbe did not care about natural scenery and natural beauty in themselves. He saw them only as a part of the great theatre on whose stage human life is being acted in all varieties of tragedy, comedy or melodrama. But Cowper loved nature in herself, loved hills and trees and woods, and all the aspects of the seasons, just as much as Thomson did before him or as Wordsworth did after him. But he describes like Crabbe; he is a realist of the finest kind. He is not able to do what Crabbe did in regard

to painting human nature; but he can paint all other nature as well as any English poet before Tennyson. As I say, it is his realism that relates him to Crabbe; and, like Crabbe, he kept to classic forms. But he is so different as to invite a separate study for his own sake—quite independently of anterior and posterior relationships.

A few extracts from a very great poet may, if well chosen, serve quite as good a purpose as a great many. I am not going to devote very many hours to Cowper; but I am going to offer you examples of his different moods and capacities, in the form of three or four selections. He has considerable variety of power. We like, as a rule, bright skies and plenty of sunshine even in poetry, and Cowper to many people seems grey, like a cloudy afternoon. But really this is a mistake. There is a good deal of colour and sun to be found in Cowper, if you will take the trouble to look for them. Moreover, the colour is not merely objective—it is often emotional. As an emotional poet, as a descriptive poet, and as a didactic poet Cowper is equally interesting. I shall begin with a very simple quotation, to illustrate the emotional side of his poetry. There is a personal note in the poem; but that personal note is the sort that can be felt by any reader of any country. I am sure that you will be reminded at once of many Japanese poems—old classic poems particularly—by a piece entitled "The Shrubbery."

The title itself requires a word of explanation. The word "shrubbery" has an almost exclusively English meaning, and that meaning has changed a little since Cowper's time. What Cowper meant by "shrubbery" was not a grove, not a great conservatory of small rare branches, but a garden of trees, artificially arranged so as to make a pleasant, shady walking place during the hot season. To-day, the word "shrubbery" refers rather to the establishment of a professional gardener.

> Oh, happy shades—to me unblest!
> Friendly to peace, but not to me!

How ill the scene that offers rest,
And heart that can not rest, agree!

This grassy stream, that spreading pine,
Those alders quivering to the breeze,
Might soothe a soul less hard than mine,
And please, if anything could please.

But fixt, unalterable care
Foregoes not what she feels within,
Shows the same sadness everywhere,
And slights the season and the scene.

For all that pleased in wood or lawn,
While peace possessed these silent bowers,
Her animating smile withdrawn,
Has lost its beauties and its powers.

The saint or moralist should tread
This moss-grown alley, musing, slow:
They seek, like me, the secret shade,
But not, like me, to nourish woe!

The fruitful scenes and prospects waste
Alike admonish not to roam;
These tell me of enjoyments past,
And those of sorrows yet to come.

Very plain, this composition; but you will find on reading it that the experience suggested is common to all thinking human lives. Natural scenery can not make us happy in a time of great moral pain, or of great sorrow caused by the death of some one whom we have loved. On the contrary, at such times the beautiful sky, beautiful flowers, beautiful lights and shadows of familiar distances only make us much more unhappy because they all remind us of past happiness that never can return—happiness shared with others. Perhaps the more beautiful the place, the more we feel this. Solitary meditation is indeed the greatest possible happiness to those following intellectual pursuits with earnest zest; but even solitary meditation must cease to be

pleasure when the mind continues to be haunted by some very great sorrow. Think, for example, of what it means to see again when you are an old man, the garden where you played with your mother and little brothers and sisters as a child—especially if that garden has long passed into the hands of strangers.

In the matter of describing nature realistically, a great poet finds no difficulty in handling the most commonplace details—I mean that he can describe stones and dust and broken fences quite as effectively as you can describe purple shadows of distance, or the flickering of sunlight upon water. Cowper is astonishingly clever in using the most commonplace details so as to make a fine effect with them. You have all known the sensations of walking about in the country just before sunset, when the light changes colour, and comes slantingly across the land, making the tops of shrubs and grasses appear more beautiful than at any other time, and throwing long queer shadows everywhere. Do you not remember, in some such sunset time, to have watched your own shadow as you walked,—lengthening out prodigiously, fantastically,—sometimes running up trees, sometimes running up the side of a house? In such a moment, perhaps, the upper part of the shadow ascends to the roof and disappears there, while the lower part of the shadow only, the legs, continues to walk along the surface of the wall. But I do not know whether any Japanese poet has described such effects. If any one has, I should like to have you compare his description with these lines of Cowper. Speaking of the sun at the horizon, he says—

> His slanting ray,
> Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
> And, tinging all with his own rosy hue,
> From every herb and every spiry blade
> Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.
> Mine, spindling into longitude immense,
> In spite of gravity, and sage remark
> That I myself am but a fleeting shade,

Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance
I view the muscular proportioned limb
Transformed to a lean shank. The shapeless pair,
As they designed to mock me, at my side
Take step for step; and, as I near approach
The cottage, walk along the plastered wall,
Preposterous sight! the legs without the man.

All the details—both objective and subjective—have an extraordinary vividness. You may very easily forget the words of the sketch; but you never can forget the picture—it remains in the mind as distinct as the memory of something actually seen with the eyes. And Cowper is just as vivid in his meditative as he is in his descriptive passages,—he makes you think with him for the moment, and in after years the thought always remains unchanged. Have you ever read his little account of a country postman, coming to the house in the evening with his heavy package of papers and letters? If you have not, you should read it; for there is nothing like it in any other English poetry. It describes conditions that have passed, but in spite of this it describes much that can not pass, expressing in a few sentences the whole romance of a thousand different emotions that the coming postman brings. To some persons he brings great sorrow—news of death, news of ruin. To others he brings great joy—messages of love. But he himself neither knows nor cares what he brings; his only thought is to perform his duty as quickly and correctly as possible. There is a sort of strange romance in the real function of the humblest postman or telegraph messenger, if you come to think about it. The one, bearing his sack of mail, and plodding through wet or dry in all seasons from house to house; the other, sending or receiving messages ticked over the wires that spread all over the earth and under every sea —either of these realises, after a fashion, that ancient fancy of angels or spirit messengers bringing death and life with equal exactness and indifference—themselves feeling no sympathy with either the suffering caused or the joy im-

parted. So great artists used to paint the faces of the angels in such a way as to show that they were without love or hate or pity—passionless and superhuman. But let us turn to the quaint picture which Cowper wrote of the English country postman of a hundred years ago—not a celestial being, by any means, but in the exercise of his duty quite as impassive as any angel need be. In those times, he used to blow a horn to announce his coming,—and I can still remember that, when I was a very little boy, living at a town called Clontarf in Ireland, the old custom still lingered there; and the postman used to ride along the street sounding his horn.

> Hark! 'Tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge. . . .
> He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
> With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
> News from all nations lumbering at his back,
> True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
> Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
> Is to conduct it to the destined inn;
> And, having dropped the expected bag, pass on.
> He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
> Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief
> Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some;
> To him indifferent whether grief or joy—
> Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,
> Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet
> With tears, that trickled down the writer's cheeks
> Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
> Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains,
> Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
> His horse and him, unconscious of them all.

There are here also some flashes of character observation,—and Cowper could be almost as clever as Crabbe in drawing character, whether as a satirist of evil or as a praiser of good. One specimen of his power in either direction will do. You may remember Crabbe's strong and cruel picture of English schoolboy life. Cowper was very unhappy at school, and he wrote more terrible things about English

schools than did Crabbe. But unlike Crabbe he proposed a remedy for some of the existing evils, and it is a curious fact that he anticipated the views of Herbert Spencer on the subject of domestic education. You know Spencer declares that every father who has the ability and the time to teach his own children ought to teach them all, not to send them at a tender age to strangers in order to learn the simple rudiments of knowledge. English people still, however, send their children far away to boarding schools while they are still only children, and the natural result is that their characters are quickly hardened and spoiled. Of course it is laziness or pride or impatience that accounts for the disinclination of thousands of English parents to teach their little ones; but they claim that it is better for the child to be made rough and hard in character as soon as possible. I believe this way of treating children will at length be abandoned; yet the condition will scarcely be changed even in a hundred years more. That Cowper should have taught the simple truth about the matter a hundred years ago is proof sufficient that in a certain direction he was very much in advance of his age.

> A father blest with an ingenuous son,
> Father, and friend, and tutor, all in one.
> How!—turn again to tales long since forgot,
> Æsop, and Phædrus, and the rest?—Why not?
> He will not blush that has a father's heart,
> To take in childish plays a childish part;
> But bends his sturdy back to any toy
> That youth takes pleasure in, to please his boy:
> Then why resign into a stranger's hand
> A task as much within your own command,
> That God and nature, and your interest too,
> Seem with one voice to delegate to you?
> Why hire a lodging in a house unknown
> For one whose tenderest thoughts all hover round your own?

And the poet goes on to describe the parting—how unhappy a little fellow is at being obliged to leave suddenly

everybody that he knows and loves, and how much pain the parents also feel at this foolish separation enforced only by a brutal custom. But the consequences of the separation are disastrous. All the time that the boy is away from home, a year or two years, he is thinking of the joy of return—but he does not know how much his own character is being changed for the worse by this absence, and when he does come home,—

> Arrived, he feels an unexpected change;
> He blushes, hangs his head, is shy and strange,
> No longer takes, as once, with fearless ease,
> His favourite stand between his father's knees,
> But seeks the corner of some distant seat,
> And eyes the door, and watches a retreat,
> And, least familiar where he should be most,
> Feels all his happiest privileges lost.
> Alas, poor boy!—the natural effect
> Of love by absence chilled into respect.

Of course the child's capacity for frankness and love has been destroyed by the brutality of school life—where the least display of sincere affection, or the least evidence of the longing for home, brings mock and ridicule, and the boy only learns on returning home that he is afraid to be openly loving and frank as before. His parents now seem to be cold, yet it is not they who have been thus changed, but himself. He wants to be away from them again, to go out and play with boys of his age, because he feels himself misunderstood. And what advantages has the boy gained at school to make up for the loss of love and frankness? Precisely nothing at all, though he may have gained some bad habit—for example, an inclination to lie or to be selfish. If the boy had been kept at home until his character had been somewhat developed and strengthened, and if he had been taught at home, he would have been very much better and wiser. Moreover, the injury done can never, never be repaired. Happily in this country there are no conditions like those described by Cowper. The Japanese child is not

entirely separated from home in the first years of school life. But if the time should ever come when he will be, there will be a great change of character for the worse.

The gentle character of the poet did not prevent him from occasionally showing great severity as a satirist. Indeed, we must suppose that gentle natures most strongly feel the wrong of this world—though few of them may care to busy themselves by describing and denouncing it. All wrong is ugliness—want of harmony in some form or other; and beauty is rather the true subject of poetry. But when the gentle poet does happen to be strongly aroused by anger or disgust, he can be much more severe than the average satirist, the merely professional poet of aggression; in our own day we have had strange examples of this—for example, in Tennyson's terrible reply to the elder Bulwer Lytton, in Browning's ferocious sonnet attacking poor Fitzgerald (who did not really deserve such treatment, especially after his death), and in Rossetti's extraordinary verses about the clergyman who, in his own garden, cut down a tree that had been planted by the hand of Shakespeare. These incidents occurred in a much more kindly age than the eighteenth century, so, after all, we need not be astonished to find Cowper composing these lines about Chesterfield. You will remember how Johnson detested Chesterfield, upon both moral and personal grounds. Cowper's detestation was only moral, but it was even stronger than Johnson's. The poem is simply entitled "The Man of the World"—by which phrase we always mean the man of society and convention.

> Petronius! all the muses weep for thee;
> But every tear shall scald thy memory:
> The graces too, while virtue at their shrine
> Lay bleeding under that soft hand of thine,
> Felt each a mortal stab in her own breast,
> Abhorred the sacrifice, and cursed the priest.
> Thou polished and high-finished foe to truth,

Grey-beard corrupter of our listening youth,
To purge and skim away the filth of vice,
That, so refined, it might the more entice,
Then pour it on the morals of thy son,
To taint *his* heart, was worthy of *thine own.*
Now, while the poison all high life pervades,
Write, if thou canst, one letter from the shades;
One, and one only, charged with deep regret
That thy worst part, thy principles, live yet;
One sad epistle thence may cure mankind
Of the plague spread by bundles left behind.

The very first word of these verses is a whole satire by itself. The name "Petronius" refers to the Roman author Petronius Arbiter, said to have been a kind of master of ceremonies at the court of the Emperor Nero. He wrote the book called "The Satiricon," which has great archæological value because it has told us hundreds of curious things about the private lives of the Romans under the empire, but is nevertheless an extremely immoral book, treating of vices whose very names are not mentioned to-day. But Petronius pretended that he wrote the book in the interest of virtue. Cowper suggests that Chesterfield's letters to his son are just as bad in another way as were the writings of Petronius, and that they were tainted with the hypocritical pretence of aiding virtue. What Chesterfield really tried to do, says Cowper, was to make vice more attractive by representing it without its natural ugliness,—by painting it as beautiful and fashionable. And it was into the heart of his son that he poured this poison! Now all high society has been corrupted by Chesterfield's teaching. "Oh, can you not write just one letter from the world of ghosts, only to tell the living that you are sorry for those bundles of letters which you wrote to your son?" asked Cowper. And observe that the poet is not indifferent to the literary charm of Chesterfield's style. He acknowledges that all the muses weep for him—that is to say, that his death is a loss to literary art. But he thinks that the tears of the muses ought to be

a torture to the dead man, because he used his great talent in a wicked way. I may tell you here that there is a distant allusion, indicated by the use of the word "scald," to the old folklore story that the tears of the living burn the dead like drops of fire—so that we must not give way to our grief for those whom we have lost.

The above is sufficient example of what Cowper could do in an unpleasant direction; but there are many more examples in his poems of strong denunciation, mingled with remarkable studies of character. Few poets have been more many sided, but of the many aspects of Cowper I think we like best his love of love, and his love of nature. We need not trouble ourselves about his religious gloom, nor about his reflections—dark enough—regarding the society and the politics of his time. But when he speaks of a beautiful landscape or of a boy's delight in play, or of the loving duties of parents, or of filial piety—then we find in him something entirely different from any other poet, and strangely sweet. Here, for example, are a few lines about the regret which we feel for our parents, when those parents can no longer know:

> We loved, but not enough, the gentle hand
> That reared us. At a thoughtless age, allured
> By every gilded folly, we renounced
> His sheltering side, and wilfully forewent
> That converse which we now in vain regret.
> How gladly would the man recall to life
> The boy's neglected sire! a mother too,
> That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,
> Might he demand them at the gates of death.
> Sorrow has, since they went, subdued and tamed
> The playful humour; he could now endure,
> (Himself grown sober in the vale of tears)
> And feel a parent's presence no restraint,
> But not to understand a treasure's worth
> Till time has stolen away the slighted good,
> Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
> And makes the world the wilderness it is.

Need I remind you of a Japanese proverb which states exactly the same truth about the relation of child to parents? There is nothing here which is not as much Japanese as English, though it is the work of an Englishman a hundred years ago. For the great poet touches strings of the heart that produce the same kind of music to all times and all places. Of course the real fact can not be helped by the child—though he may afterward regret it. He does not like to talk with his father and mother better than to play with little boys of his own age; and when the father comes to look at the playing, the little fellow becomes shy, and feels afraid to be quite himself. So it is only at long intervals that he has a friendly talk with his father, but when he grows up and finds out how cruel the struggle of our life is, and how few good friends can be obtained in this world—then he remembers his father and mother, wishes that he could talk to them, and recollects how in times when they wanted him to talk to them, he preferred to play. Of course this late knowledge, as Cowper says, is one of the tragedies of life. But the fault may often be more the parents' than the child's. If a father can not make himself a child in feeling for the sake of his little boy, and play with him like a boy, then it is natural that the child should feel strange with him. The mother usually understands the little heart much better, and gets more of the child's love, as the poet suggests. The father's thoughts are apt to be too much occupied with business.

There is yet one more thing to remember about Cowper; he was not only a humourist, but one who delighted to play with all the bright trifles of life. The man who in his moments of religious fanaticism was almost maddened with melancholy, could in other moments make the whole world laugh; and the world still laughs at the diverting history of John Gilpin, which I suppose you have all read. Moreover, he delighted to play with pet dogs, pet animals of any kind, but especially hares. The hares of Cowper have become

famous in literature, for he wrote poems about them, and he composed a very pretty epitaph for the tomb of one that died. You know that these creatures are very shy in their wild state, and Cowper's pets were wild hares, not caged creatures like rabbits. Indeed he seems to have had something of the same understanding about creatures as the wonderful American Thoreau, although Thoreau was altogether a more extraordinary man. Thoreau lived in the woods with wild creatures; he could make the wild birds come to his hand, and the fish of the rivers knew him and would follow his shadow. But Thoreau had no religious notions about him; and Cowper's dark ideas of the universe probably prevented him from enjoying to the utmost those pleasures of companionship with animals and birds that his natural faculties fitted him for. If you want to make animals understand you, as well as love you, you must not refuse to believe that they have souls—by souls I mean a thinking life. However, Cowper could make his hares and his dogs love him, and he wrote some pretty poems about both. I think you will remember the story of his spaniel, who seeing his master vainly trying to reach a flower growing in the river by which they had been walking together, jumped into the stream, took the stalk of the flower between his teeth, bit it off and brought it to his master. At least this little poem, "The Dog and the Waterlily," is now in almost every anthology. It is written in the eighteenth century style—much like Gray's astonishing poem on the cat that drowned herself while trying to catch some gold fish in a glass vessel. But the verse is otherwise more simple than Gray's, and being written in quatrains only, is much better known.

In conclusion—now that we have considered the variety of Cowper—let me say that the student should remember Cowper's place in poetry as being just as curious as the position of Crabbe. Both Crabbe and Cowper were classic by training, and wrote mostly in classic form,—Cowper, indeed

less than Crabbe. Still the position of both was this, that while their education forced them to adhere to classic form, the spirit of their poetry is not classical at all, and this keeps it warmly alive, while their classical contemporaries are slowly but surely fading out of memory.

CHAPTER VI

BLAKE—THE FIRST ENGLISH MYSTIC

In more ways than one Blake was the greatest poet of the eighteenth century—not, perhaps, in the whole of what he did, but certainly in the best of it. If we have to class him as a minor poet, it is chiefly because of the small quantity of his great work, not because he is at any time inferior to other poets of his age. Altogether he was one of the most extraordinary persons in the whole history of English letters. He was not only a poet, but a very great painter. Also he was a wonderful prose writer. And finally he must be remembered as the first great English mystic. England has not produced many mystical writers of the first rank, and Blake almost stands alone. To find companions for him in this relation, we must look outside of England. He belongs rather to that class of mystics represented abroad by Swedenborg and by Jacob Boehme.

But let us here first define the meaning of Mystic. It is to-day a term of very wide signification; formerly its meaning was more restricted. Originally the term was ecclesiastical; a mystic, in the language of the church, would have been a man directly inspired from heaven to write or to speak of divine things. Mysticism was then the condition of divine inspiration. Later the metaphysical philosophy held a mystic to be a person who believed that through religious faith and meditation it was possible to obtain knowledge of things which could be learned neither by reason nor through the senses. Latterly, that is to-day, we consider mysticism to be any form of belief in the possibility of holding communication with the invisible world, or of obtaining higher knowledge, by following a particular course of religious training or meditation. Indeed, even the man

who merely believes in this possibility is apt to be called a mystic. Thus, many writers in Europe to-day who believe that the highest knowledge can be obtained from the studies of Indian philosophy or Buddhist philosophy, are called mystics, just as Christian dreamers were called mystics centuries ago. The word, as you may have guessed already, is very closely connected with the idea of mystery. In the shortest possible way, we might define a mystic as one who believes that superhuman knowledge can be obtained by religious faith of any kind. Now Blake was a mystic in every sense of the word that we have been trying to define. He was a Christian mystic, a non-Christian mystic, and almost a theosophical mystic in the most modern sense of the word.

Altogether not the least strange thing about this strange man was the fact of his belonging to the eighteenth century, the most prosaic and unimaginative age of English literature. It was a period almost without real poetry, except in the matter of mere form; and in the great bare desert of its literature Blake blossoms like a strange wild-flower of unfamiliar colour and yet more unfamiliar perfume. I must tell you a few facts about his life, which are very interesting, and which I think you will consider very curious.

Blake was born in 1757 in London, the son of a wine merchant. His family had been greatly influenced by the teaching of Swedenborg; and it is possible that the fact may have affected his character from the earliest age—I mean that he might have inherited either through his mother or through his father some predisposition to a mystical emotion. At all events he came into the world a strangely sensitive and imaginative child, always seeing ghosts and visions. Almost as soon as he was able to talk, he talked of seeing things which nobody else could see; and as soon as he learned something about Bible stories and Christian belief, he used to see patriarchs and prophets and angels walking about, and used to talk to them. Once he said that

he saw God the Father looking at him through the window. Many sensitive children see ghosts and goblins and all kinds of things up to the age of about seven years, but in the greater number of such cases the illusions soon pass away, whereas Blake remained during his whole life in the visionary state of the child. In fact, he may be said to have passed most of his existence in the company of ghosts, holding very little communication with real men and women. The world is apt to judge such people as mad, and there is no doubt that Blake was a little mad during the whole of his life. But his madness did not prevent him from becoming a great poet and a very great artist; indeed, it rather helped him.

It was considered dangerous to send him to school, because he was too delicate and too imaginative. He was taught at home only until he became old enough to learn a trade. Then his father apprenticed him to an engraver; and during his apprenticeship he gave proof of extraordinary talent. There is a queer story told about him at this time. One day his father brought him to the studio of a very successful artist called Rylands; and after he had been in the house only a few minutes, he whispered to his father, "Father, I do not like that man's face; he looks as if he were going to be hanged one of these days." Strange to say, this man Rylands was hanged a few years after for the crime of forgery.

Having become a journey-man engraver—that is, one who has finished his apprenticeship, and is able to command the highest price paid—Blake remained but for a short time in the employ of others. His ambition was to become independent. And indeed independence was necessary for him. He was one of those men who never can be induced to submit to regulations which they do not like; and he could never do exactly what he was wanted to do. Meantime, after a severe disappointment in love, he married a girl who made him an excellent wife, sharing his peculiar ideas and

beliefs as perhaps no other woman would have done. Luckily they had no children; for Blake was destined to live in poverty for the rest of his existence. He did establish an office of his own, but in that office he gave all his time to the publishing and illustrating of his own books. At one time he was helped by his brother Robert; but Robert died young. Afterward Blake said that the ghost of Robert had come to him and taught him a new mechanical process of engraving on copper plates. Whether this was imagination or not, certain it is that Blake invented a new system of printing; and he believed that he learned it from the spirit of his dead brother. This process is still in use, but has been very much improved. In order to print his poems by this method Blake was obliged to engrave the whole of the text backwards upon the copper plates. He printed his pictures only in black and white; but afterwards he and his wife used to colour the pictures by hand. They were very wonderful pictures; and Blake was able to attract the attention of great artists and great poets by this work. Friends subscribed enough money to keep him alive, but not enough money to enable him to do all that he wished to do, for his method of printing was very expensive, and he could not sell many copies of his extraordinary books. After many years of this patient solitary work, he died in 1827. He left behind him one hundred volumes of illustrated poetry and prose, which he said he had been inspired to write and to illustrate by angels and other holy spirits.

His wife survived him for only a short time. When she was about to die she gave all this great mass of precious manuscript and priceless drawings to a clergyman named Tatham, who had been a great friend of Blake. Tatham belonged to a curious Christian sect, called the "Irvingites," who were mystics. Tatham, after the death of Mrs. Blake, looked at the books and made up his mind that the work had been inspired by the Devil. Therefore, without asking anybody's advice, he burned the books and pictures. There

were so many books and so many pictures that it took two days to burn them all. This was certainly one of the greatest crimes ever committed against literature and art. What little of Blake's work is left to-day chiefly belongs to the British Museum, and is considered beyond price. You must go to the British Museum to see it. As an artist Blake has had a great deal of influence upon the modern painters; and almost every modern painter of note goes to the British Museum to study the work of Blake.

But we are here concerned chiefly with Blake's poetry. This poetry naturally divides itself into three parts. The first division represents what Blake wrote when quite a young man and while under the influence of Elizabethan poets. The second division comprises what he wrote after he had found his own way, and before he came to believe that everything that he wrote was the work of ghosts and spirits. The third division represents that later period of his life when he lived altogether in a state of hallucination, and believed that all he wrote was dictated to him by heavenly powers. At this period he had ceased to believe in Swedenborg; he had invented a mysticism of his own. He died singing a mystic song, and declared that his room was full of spirits. When Blake could not be satisfied with Swedenborg, you may be sure that his mysticism was of a very original kind. I may mention here that Emanuel Swedenborg (born in 1688—died 1776) founded a most extraordinary form of modern Christian mysticism—teaching that the Bible had two meanings, a hidden meaning and an apparent meaning; and that he himself had a revelation of the hidden meaning. So his church, which now calls itself the New Jerusalem Church, even counts its years from the date of Swedenborg's revelation. But Blake, in the latter part of his life, thought that he knew more than Swedenborg, and that he had a revelation of his own.

As might be expected from these facts, it is chiefly the poetry of Blake's youth and middle age that has enduring

value. The poetry of his last years—at least so much of it as was not burned by Tatham—is scarcely comprehensible. There are fine passages in it, but much of it seems to be madness. Curiously enough, the only other poet of the eighteenth century who could be compared for originality with Blake was also mad—the poet Christopher Smart.

I shall also speak very briefly of Blake's poetical prose. He wrote a great deal of mystical fancy and story in a kind of prose that looks at first sight very much like the poetry of Walt Whitman. But it is very much finer than most of Whitman's work, and it was inspired chiefly by the reading of the Bible and the reading of Ossian. There is no question that Blake's work in this direction influenced Coleridge. Perhaps you know Coleridge wrote one wonderful piece of prose-poetry called "The Wanderings of Cain." Coleridge got his inspiration from Blake, and passed it on to Bulwer Lytton, who again passed it on to Poe. Thus we may say that Blake's influence indirectly affected most of our nineteenth century literature of imagination; for there is scarcely any writer of the nineteenth century that has not been a little influenced by Poe.

Now let us turn to the poetry. Blake does not get his strong grasp of simplicity at first. At first he resembles the Elizabethan poets so much that he has been called the last of the Elizabethans. He imitates Spenser and the lyrists of Shakespeare's day. But even in this first period, he tells us how dissatisfied he feels with the artificial poetry of his time—with the schools of Dryden and of Pope; and this dissatisfaction he expresses in very beautiful verses, which have become immortal—

TO THE MUSES

Whether on Ida's shady brow
Or in the chambers of the East,
The chambers of the sun, that now
From ancient melody have ceased;—

Whether in heaven ye wander fair,
  Or the green corners of the earth,
Or the blue regions of the air
  Where the melodious winds have birth;

Whether on crystal rocks ye rove,
  Beneath the bosom of the sea
Wandering in many a coral grove,
  Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry!

How have you left the ancient love
  That bards of old enjoyed in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move,
  The sound is forced, the notes are few!

The want of the emotional element, the want of the deeper sense of truth and beauty in eighteenth century poetry, is well stated here. The time of Pope was indeed a time at which the Nine Muses seem to have fled away from England. By the term "bards of old," Blake certainly means the writers of the age of Elizabeth, who did not often write verse so correct in form as the verse of Pope, but who were incomparably greater poets than Pope in the true meaning of poetry. Poetry is something that should stir our emotions, or make us think new thoughts; whatever can do neither the one nor the other may be very good verse but it is not poetry. Here Blake is right. How well he could imitate the "bards of old" is shown in the little song which the greatest living English critic pronounces "ineffable melody"—

Memory, hither come,
  And tune your merry notes:
And, while upon the wind
  Your music floats,
I'll pore upon the stream
Where sighing lovers dream,
And fish for fancies as they pass
Within the watery glass.

I'll drink of the clear stream,
  And hear the linnet's song;
And there I'll lie and dream
  The day along;
And when night comes, I'll go
To places fit for woe,
Walking along the darkened valley
With silent Melancholy.

Both of these compositions prove to us at once that we are in the presence of a nature lover like Herrick, or like the singers of Shakespeare's day. The school of Pope could not have uttered anything like this. A very pretty idea is that about "fishing for fancies" in the river; we all do the thing, while we watch the flowing of a clear river, but how many of us could have thought of expressing what we do in words like these?

It is rather in the "Songs of Innocence" and the "Songs of Experience" that we find the first utterance of Blake's true note, the mystical note, allied with almost childish simplicity of expression. Let me speak about the meanings of these titles. "The Songs of Innocence" are supposed to represent conditions of mind in happy childhood, or in that time of life before we learn to understand what the suffering of this world really is. On the other hand, "Songs of Experience" are supposed to reflect our thoughts after the painful facts of life have been comprehended. To the first class of songs belong several which have passed into nearly all English anthologies—such as "The Lamb," "Spring," "Infant Joy." All children now learn these by heart; I do not think that I need quote any of them to you. But the "Songs of Experience" are not so well known—if known as to form, not so well understood as to meaning. There are very curious and very terrible things here, expressed in the softest and quietest way imaginable. What, for example, do you think of this?

A POISON TREE

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunnèd it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright;
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

You can make a great number of different meanings out of such a poem as this. It strongly suggests, among other things, certain eastern ideas, about the unseen influence of revengeful thoughts. But without attempting to carry the application of the comparison too far, suffice it to say that the verse excellently depicts the dangerous quality of concealed resentment as compared with outspoken anger. Nevertheless the more often that you read the poem, the more often will you make new discoveries in it.

This simplicity of Blake's is of a very deceiving kind; what appear to be baby-songs, for example, often turn out to have a meaning deep enough to make a philosopher think twice. Probably you know that little poem by Blake about the girl who was lost far away in the forest, and was taken care of by lions. It is very pretty, and children learn it by heart. But it was certainly inspired by the curious belief of the Middle Ages that tigers and other wild beasts could

not harm a virgin, and the deeper meaning of the poem is the strength of innocence in its charm. Or take the poem about a fly—such a little trifle! Yet how much it can give one to think about.

THE FLY

Little Fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance,
And drink, and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life
And strength and breath,
And the want
Of thought is death,

Then am I
A happy fly,
If I live
Or if I die.

It looks like a nonsense-rhyme, but it is not. The poet has killed a fly unintentionally, and the sudden death of the little creature has set him to thinking about the great mystery of life. He asks what is the difference, in the eternal order of things, between the life of a man and the life of a fly. Do not men live much like flies, after all, thinking only of pleasure, never or seldom of death? What is life? If what we call mind is real life, then indeed death makes

no difference, for there can be no real death. But the question is not answered. It is only put, and you must think out the answer for yourself. Try to do that; and you will discover that the verses are not simple at all.

But let us take something less metaphysical.

A LITTLE BOY LOST

"Nought loves another as itself,
  Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to Thought
  A greater than itself to know.

"And, Father, how can I love you
  Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
  That picks up crumbs around the door."

The Priest sat by and heard the child,
  In trembling zeal he seized his hair,
He led him by his little coat,
  And all admired the priestly care.

And standing on the altar high,
  "Lo! what a fiend is here," said he,
"One who sets reason up for judge
  Of our most holy mystery."

The weeping child would not be heard,
  The weeping parents wept in vain;
They stripped him to his little shirt,
  And bound him in an iron chain;

And burned him in a holy place
  Where many had been burned before:
The weeping parents wept in vain.
  Are such things done on Albion's shore?

The whole story of the Inquisition is related in this little poem. But you will perhaps not catch the meaning at the first reading, unless you are familiar with certain expressions

having reference to Christian doctrine. Understand, first of all, the Christian is ordered to love his neighbour as himself and to love God more than himself. A child is supposed to be arguing the question with the Heavenly Father. He says that it is impossible for anybody to love another person in the same way as one loves one's self, and it is impossible for the simple mind to imagine anything of mind greater than itself—statements which are from the child's standpoint quite true. The child asks, "How can I love you or my brother any more than I do love you? I love you just as a little bird loves a person who gives it food." For this he is burned alive. What makes the poem seem emotionally horrible to us is the introduction of this little innocent child as the victim; for, as a matter of fact, the religious persecutors seldom burned children under sixteen years of age, except when there was a general massacre of heretics. But the poet uses the figure of the child quite properly for his didactic purpose. In reality, he means that in the sight of the eternal power, in the sight of the Supreme Wisdom, we are all like little foolish children, and that we are especially foolish in being cruel to each other. After telling the story he asks, are such things done in England? The answer is that they were done, hundreds of times, not only by Catholics, but sometimes also by Protestants, who occasionally showed a bigotry and a cruelty quite worthy of the Dark Ages. It is great art to express a terrible truth in the form of an innocent little story; and Blake has shown this art admirably in the little poem which we have just read.

Let us now take a little cradle song. You know that a cradle song is a song sung by a mother to make her child fall asleep. This baby song, however, is not for babies; only those who have thought a great deal about the sorrow and mystery of life can really understand it. Yet I do not think that you will readily guess the meaning of it before you read the very last line.

A CRADLE SONG

Sleep! sleep! beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night;
Sleep! sleep! in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet Babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel,
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart doth rest.

O! the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep.
When thy little heart doth wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break.

I have put the last two lines in italics, because they are the key to the whole meaning. These are the thoughts of a father, watching his own child asleep. Sometimes the child's dreams are happy; then the little face smiles. Sometimes the dreams are bad; then the little fellow sobs in his sleep. The father thinks somewhat as follows: "Pain and Pleasure—they come even to the sleeping baby. How many wonderful possibilities are locked up in that little brain and in that little heart, possibilities of future and larger pleasure and pain. These are only the sorrows and joys of a child's dreams. But are we not, all of us, like children dreaming? At all events the whole of childhood is a dream. Manhood or womanhood is the awakening; then come the greater pains, because of the greater knowledge. When a little boy has grown up to be a man, how terrible will be the pain that he must suffer when he learns to know what life really is!"

Now we have another queer little poem, which forms a companion piece to "A Little Boy Lost." It is called "A

Little Girl Lost,"—just like the very pretty poem in the "Songs of Innocence" describing how the lions took care of a baby girl that had lost her way. But this second poem with the same title is not a song of innocence, but a song of experience, and the lions do not in this case come to take care of the wandering maiden.

A LITTLE GIRL LOST

Children of the future age,
Reading this indignant page,
Know that in a former time
Love, sweet love, was thought a crime!

In the age of gold,
Free from winter's cold,
Youth and maiden bright
To the holy light,
Naked in the sunny beams delight.

Once a youthful pair,
Filled with softest care,
Met in garden bright
Where the holy light
Had just removed the curtains of the night.

There, in rising day,
On the grass they play;
Parents were afar,
Strangers came not near,
And the maiden soon forgot her fear.

Tired with kisses sweet,
They agreed to meet
When the silent sleep
Waves o'er heaven's deep,
And the weary tired wanderers weep.

To her father white
Came the maiden bright;
But his loving look,
Like the holy book,
All her tender limbs with terror shook.

"Ona, pale and weak!
To thy father speak:
O! the trembling fear,
O! the dismal care,
That shakes the blossoms of my hoary hair!"

What does this strange thing mean? Well, it is the old story of the Garden of Eden, told over again, with a modern application. Blake pretends to talk about the Age of Gold, the age of perpetual summer and native innocence, but he is really talking about modern English life. The innocent girl who has not been taught how to take care of herself, as a girl should be taught, might be compared with some Eve of the Golden Age. It is very easy to take advantage of her, for she really believes what is told her, and if her seducer promises to marry her, she is quite satisfied. She does not think that real love can be very bad; her first discovery of how bad it may be, comes when her parents discover that she has been deceived by some unscrupulous man. Nothing more terrible could happen to a human being than is likely to happen to a girl in England known to have been seduced. Not only is the family disgraced; the girl is in every possible way ruined, destroyed, practically murdered. For there is no cruelty compared to the cruelty of English society to the girl who has made a mistake. She can not stay at home, she can not be protected even by her own parents in many cases. She can not possibly obtain employment in any family. She can not even obtain employment in a factory, or in any place where her history is known. There is a pressure upon her, like the weight of the whole world, to force her into the career of a prostitute. Yet the man is not blamed who has done her this immeasurable wrong. And in many cases, the girl has been fooled through affection, through trust, through the goodness and the pureness of her heart. The purpose of this poem is to make English readers ask themselves, Is it really right ~~to~~ judge the mistakes of affection as cruelly as the world has been judging them? But like the great

teachers of the *Zen* sect, Blake suggests questions without giving answers; you must think of the answers for yourself. In the artistic arrangement of the book, the first of the little girls lost is protected even by lions, because she is innocent; while the second of the little girls lost is condemned even by her own father, because she has ceased to be innocent. That is the contrast which the poet wants you to feel. Whether it is right or wrong that such things be, he does not argue; he only tells you that such things are.

Strong contrast of thought this poet is very fond of; and I can give you quite as remarkable an example of another kind. In the "Songs of Innocence" there is a little poem called "The Divine Image." In this poem the unselfish virtues are spoken of as divine, and the man who practises them is said to become, by their practice, an image of God. I shall quote a few of the verses.

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
  All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight
  Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
  Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
  Is Man, His child and care.

But in the collection of poems called "Ideas of Good and Evil," the same subject is treated in a different and very startling manner.

I heard an angel singing
When the day was springing:
"Mercy, Pity, Peace
Are the world's release."

Thus he sang all day
Over the new mown hay,
Till the sun went down,
And haycocks looked brown.

I heard a devil curse
Over the heath and the furze:
"Mercy could be no more
If there was nobody poor,

"And Pity no more could be,
If all were happy as we."
At his curse the sun went down,
And the heavens gave a frown.

Down poured the heavy rain
Over the new reaped grain;
And Misery's increase
Is Mercy, Pity, Peace.

Perhaps you know that philosophical theory about the impossibility of such emotions as mercy, pity, self-sacrifice in an absolutely perfect world. Such virtues exist where they are needed; but in a state of society where they would not be needed, they would not exist. However, what the demon here wishes to suggest is that the more compassion we have in the world, the more the world is miserable; and, as for peace, the best guarantee of peace is being afraid of each other. Peace may not at all be proved by good will, but only by signs of terror. The statements both of the angel and of the devil are quite true; much as they seem to contradict each other, you must try to believe them both, for if you think only of what the devil said, then the world will become dark for you.

A like strange idea is to be found in one of the "Songs of Experience," called "The Human Abstract." This is a very ugly poem. It represents, in a mystical way, the difficulty of trying to be good in this world, and suggests that all life is ruled by selfishness. Perhaps we might call it an abstract history of the human intellect from a pessimistic point of view.

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody poor;
And mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we.

And mutual fear brings peace,
Till the selfish loves increase;
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears;
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the caterpillar and fly
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought through Nature to find this tree;
But their search was all in vain;
There grows one in the human brain.

This is a little hard to understand at first reading, but an outline of explanation will make it clear enough. The poet means that in the brain of almost every man there is contained something of the whole history of the human race, with all its faults as well as its virtues. He describes this history as an evolution—like the growth of a tree. The vices of man have been caused by his past necessities. When the distinction between rich and poor became established, then the rich and powerful became cruel and oppressive. After the period of oppression by armed force came the period of oppression by superior cunning and deceit. Probably the poet refers to what we would call to-day the industrial oppression. By "mystery" the poet means the old religions, and by "caterpillar and fly," he means the ancient priesthood living by religion, but using their influence in

favour of the strong against the weak. So that at last this condition of things created hypocrisy, "the fruit of deceit" as the poet calls it, and we are now obliged to live, everybody on guard against his fellowmen, and unable to explain his thoughts of affection without great precaution. We were not so, he thinks, long ago, but we have been made so by past cruelties.

The way in which he sometimes utters a very deep thought is quite startling. It is an old question whether love is selfish or unselfish—I mean sexual love. The philosopher has no doubt about the matter; but the poetic imagination always tries to insist upon the unselfishness of the passion. Yet he makes a clod—that is, a lump of clay,—talk with a pebble on the subject, and expresses rather a dark view of the question.

"Love seeketh not itself to please,
  Nor for itself hath any care.
But for another gives its ease,
  And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair."

So sung a little clod of clay,
  Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a pebble of the brook
  Warbled out these metres meet:

"Love seeketh only Self to please,
  To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
  And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite."

Why the poet should make use of the clod and of the pebble as personages, I do not think anybody knows; we may imagine that the soft clay expresses the gentler side of human nature (which, you know, is often spoken of as human clay), and that the pebble means the hard side of humanity. But this is only guessing. The fact is not expressed in itself. But the verses are interesting, because you will find that both of the contradictory statements are quite

true in a certain sense. What appears to be a contradiction is not really so. It is only a presentation of opposites.

I am going to give only one more example of this queer poetry, entitled "The Smile."

There is a smile of love,
  And there is a smile of deceit,
And there is a smile of smiles,
  In which these two smiles meet.

And there is a frown of hate,
  And there is a frown of disdain,
And there is a frown of frowns
  Which you strive to forget in vain.

For it sticks in the heart's deep core
  And it sticks in the deep backbone—
And no smile that ever was smiled,
  But only one smile alone,

That between the cradle and grave
  It only once smiled can be:
And when it once is smiled,
  There's an end to all misery.

The smile which contains both love and deceit might be a good smile, and might be a bad one; we sometimes deceive kindly, for a good purpose. The second and third stanzas, especially the third, contain some difficulties. The frown of frowns certainly relates to death, but what is the smile mentioned in connection with it? The poem has puzzled several commentators, but I think that Blake means the laugh of death, the grin of the skull, which indeed is "only once smiled," and never changes, and thereafter there is indeed an end of misery. The four stanzas will serve another purpose in this connection. They will show you how fantastic and difficult to understand, Blake sometimes is. Various poems which he wrote in the latter part of his life contain similar oddities and obscurities, but they usually contain also something that makes you think—and think so

much that you are willing to forgive the faults of the poet for the sake of the good things which he offers you.

I have said enough about Blake to make you understand the nature of his influence, which has been and still continues to be very considerable. There were other English mystics; but there was no other mystical poet before Blake who thought of expressing himself in similar language, the language of a child. You will observe that almost any of the poems which I have quoted for you are in child language, and might be read by little boys and girls who would never guess the depth of meaning behind the verses. In our own day every poet of importance makes a serious study of Blake; there is perhaps no poet of the Victorian age that has not learned a great deal from him. This is his chief glory.

CHAPTER VII

WORDSWORTH

Although Wordsworth is one of the most important figures in English poetry, he is also one of the most tiresome, most vapid, most commonplace of English poets in certain respects. Although he has written some of the best poems in English literature, he has also written an astonishing quantity of nonsense. I should never find fault with anybody for detesting Wordsworth, yet at one time Wordsworth was so much beloved as a poet that it was considered a mark of bad taste to find fault with him. It required considerable courage to tell the truth about Wordsworth before Matthew Arnold boldly proclaimed it. And the truth is that very little of Wordsworth will live. I have before me here a volume of the complete poems of Wordsworth representing very nearly a thousand pages, of small type—two columns to a page. And I am very sure that everything really great and precious in the book could be printed in considerably less than one hundred pages. In regard to inequality, few poets are worse than Wordsworth. You must try to think of him as a man who wrote poetry as regularly and untiringly as a machine cuts or saws wood. Nevertheless, at rare moments, some sudden inspiration rushed into the soul of the man, and made him a true poet. I do not think that he himself ever knew when he did his best. And the difference between his best and his worst is so great, so extraordinary, that we can not understand it; it is one of the great mysteries of English literature.

Enough then to say that if a man has patience to pick out the good poetry which is to be found in the midst of the great mass of rubbish written by Wordsworth, he will be rewarded for his pains. Yet how many of you would like

to read one thousand double-columned pages of small type in order to find fifty pages of beautiful poetry? I imagine very few. Happily this selection has been done for us by such anthologists as the late Mr. Palgrave and by such critics as Matthew Arnold, who made the best existing selection. You need not try to read the whole of Wordsworth. You need not even try to read the whole of the selection by Matthew Arnold. Indeed, this selection is not altogether the best possible for Japanese students. But every literary graduate of this university ought at least to know the name of Wordsworth and to be able to say something about his place in English literature. To state this latter fact as briefly as possible and to illustrate it by examples from his poems, will be the object of this lecture.

I am not going to speak of Wordsworth's history; that does not concern us now. I want only to tell you about Wordsworth as a nature poet, and to explain how he is related to other poets. There were two men in the eighteenth century—two poets of the Age of Johnson,—who greatly influenced Wordsworth. One of these poets was Cowper; the other was Crabbe. They were both of them natural poets in a certain sense, although following classical rules of composition. Cowper wrote about the fields, brooks, birds; about dogs, horses and cows; about farmers, labourers and village-women—in short, about natural things exactly as he saw them. He saw them in a happy way, and what he said about them makes us happy to read. Crabbe was very different, though quite as great a poet. Crabbe wrote about farmers and about village-women and country life, exactly as he saw them; but he saw the pain and the weariness and all the ignorance and suffering of the English peasant; so that what he says about them makes us very sad to read, all the more sad because we feel that it must be true. Before Cowper and Crabbe there were no poets in England who wrote as they did about these different aspects of nature and of human life.

Wordsworth is their immediate successor. He followed the methods both of Cowper and of Crabbe, though he did not copy their forms of verse. He imagined that much good work could be done by writing in simple verse about common things. Old poets had written only about grand things, heroic things, ideal matters, before the time of Cowper and of Crabbe. But both Cowper and Crabbe had shown that beautiful poetry could be written about horses, dogs, cows,—or about the sufferings of poor ignorant people, mountain peasants or city labourers. So Wordsworth resolved to write only about such matters. At least, he began with this resolution. Later on, it is true, he wrote about history, politics, religion; but it is in his poems about common life that he is often great, and it is only of such poems that I intend to speak.

In what respect, you may ask, does he differ from Cowper and Crabbe? I think that we may say especially in reflection. He is nearer to Cowper than to Crabbe; for Crabbe is a great realist, who scarcely ever indulges in reflections or comments. Cowper, on the contrary, often reflects, but his thoughts at such times are mostly of a narrow religious kind. Wordsworth was more of a philosopher. He was religious by character, without being religious according to dogma. And his spirit of reflection was something new in English poetry. It was generous, large, tolerant, and almost pantheistic in tone. There was in it a kindly melancholy that exactly suited the English mind of fifty years ago. Probably the English mind to-day would require something much larger than Wordsworth's poetical philosophy.

Now we have said all that is necessary as to Wordsworth's literary relation to the eighteenth century. It remains to state how far he exemplifies his own theory of poetry. It must be acknowledged that even here he is very imperfect and disappointing. He did not have the artistic judgment

either of Cowper or of Crabbe. He had no sense of the ridiculous. Cowper and Crabbe knew that there were common subjects which really could not be treated in poetry, subjects which were unworthy of poetry. But Wordsworth never learned this. Whatever interested him must, he thought, interest everybody; and he wrote much verse upon subjects which are not worth a moment's consideration. However, sometimes he succeeded in carrying out his theory to the full; and by his successes he belongs to the very first rank of English singers.

Wordsworth was a man who composed nearly all of his shorter poems standing up. He lived in the country, and would make a poem as he walked about in the fields and the woods, whenever he saw anything that interested him. For example, two little beggar boys asked him for money, and he at once composed a poem about the little beggar boys. Or he sees a child using a wash-tub for a boat—sitting in it, and paddling with his hands, just as we see little boys doing in Japanese brooks and rivers every summer—and he makes a little poem about the boy and his boat. Or he is charmed by some beautiful sunset, some display of flowers, the song of a bird, the song of a girl working in the fields; and as he walks back home he composes a poem about the sunset, the flowers, the bird or the peasant girl. I imagine that he was about the only English poet that ever worked constantly in this way—although we know that Sir Walter Scott used to compose songs while riding at full speed on his horse. Now let us take examples of Wordsworth on the topics mentioned. Let us begin with a poem about a peasant girl singing, called "The Solitary Reaper." In England as in Japan the women often sing while at work in the fields. Japanese poets have made songs on this subject, but I do not think that any of them have become so widely known here as Wordsworth's poem has become widely known abroad.

It contains a few lines that are quoted in thousands of

books and that might be justly described by Tennyson's verse regarding "jewels five words long, that on the stretched forefinger of all time sparkle forever."

THE SOLITARY REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chant
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending:—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

The first two stanzas merely interest us by their suggestion of the charm of the young voice, and its effect

upon the poet. The third stanza is the famous one—famous because it expresses so much with a very few simple words. The air is melancholy and strange; and the poet listening wishes he could find out what the song is about—that he could learn the words of it. But he knows that it would be useless to question the girl herself; she would not understand why a stranger would approach her with such a question, and she would probably become at once shy and distrustful. And there is no one else to tell him what the song is, so he can not know. But he tries to imagine its meaning from the melancholy air of the melody. Perhaps it is a ballad of ancient times—a ballad about very sad things that happened in past centuries—a ballad about old kings and chieftains, and great forgotten battles. Most Highland ballads are about such matters. But please observe how many words I have been using only to say very badly what Wordsworth says so beautifully in eight short words:

> Old, unhappy, far-off things
> And battles long ago.

Those few little words express whole pages of meaning. And critics have well recognised the extraordinary suggestiveness of the phrase, "old, unhappy, far-off things." Then the last stanza has an almost equal charm of narrative truth. We should, any of us, do exactly as the poet did under the same circumstances, and feel just as he felt. Charmed by the sweetness of the voice, and the melancholy of the song, we should feel sorry when the silence came; and as we turned homeward, the voice would still be in our memories, or, as the poet more beautifully puts it, in our hearts.

Well, you have here one example of a very common subject made beautiful by the art of a very uncommon mind. When Wordsworth wrote that, he had one of his fine fits of inspiration.

Now take the subject of flowers, a subject so much treated in English poetry that, before Wordsworth's time, it had been almost worn threadbare—that is to say, become almost tiresome, and apparently exhausted. But this threadbare subject under Wordsworth's touch magically regains all its ancient freshness. There is nothing philosophical, novel or artificial in the following verses; everything said there has been said before, and never in a more simple way—yet how the little picture burns itself into the memory, with all the colours of the bright day described!

THE DAFFODILS

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a cloud,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company;
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
That wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

The daffodil is a bright yellow flower, and a bed of daffodils in blossom really produces such a blaze of colour as

would remind a Japanese traveller of the blossoming of the *Natane* in some parts of this country. The effect described by the poet must have been greatly enhanced by the proximity of the dancing lake-water beyond the flowers, bright blue under the sun. You know what a fine contrast is made by the meeting of blue and yellow. This is a bit of painting from the English lakes. But the point of the poem, written nearly one hundred years ago, is not in the description; it comes, like a surprise, with the last stanza. Have you ever noticed what the effect of certain bright scenes may be upon your own senses? It is at night particularly that the phenomenon may be studied. You blow out the lamp and lie down to sleep, and close your eyes; then, all at once, in the dark you see in bright sunshine some incident that impressed you during the day. Perhaps it is a street, with people passing by, and children playing; and perhaps it is the face of a friend with whom you have been talking. Or it is a scene of travelling,—a stretch of sea beach, with waves breaking silently. This may come to you again and again—come to you also in dreams, and you will never entirely forget it. I am told that old persons see these after-images more clearly than young persons; but everybody sees them at times. This is more than what is commonly called imagination or memory; perhaps we might call it perfected visual memory. It may be pleasant or unpleasant. But if the experience thus recalled be of a happy and beautiful kind, a visual memory is accompanied by the revival of the same happy feeling.

It is so in the poet's case. He felt more than common pleasure in the sight of the yellow flowers swaying in the summer breeze beside the sunlit water; and afterwards, whenever the picture returned to his memory, he felt the joy of the moment again—the happiness of the season, and of the sunlight and of the bright air, all of which seem to him expressed by the "dancing" of the yellow flowers. One expression in the last stanza I hope you will remember, as it is

now very famous—"that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude." Of course the poet means, by "inward eye," the faculty of imagination; and imagination indeed makes the pleasure of solitude—that is, enables its possessor to be happy in spite of being alone.

Sometimes common things make the poet more serious, as in the famous lines about a kitten playing with dead leaves. We all see little cats doing this in the autumn days, when the ground is covered with fallen leaves, which occasional gusts of wind send spinning and rustling in circles. At such a time a kitten delights to run after the wind-blown leaves, or to leap up and catch them as they flutter down; and it is one of the prettiest things that we could wish to see. But we do not often think seriously of the picture, as Wordsworth does. I am going to quote from this poem for another reason. I want you to observe one charming fact in regard to Wordsworth. When he becomes serious he does not become melancholy. The seriousness of Wordsworth is of a decidedly happy kind, except in those cases where he is telling a story with a naturally pathetic ending.

That way look, my infant, lo!
What a pretty baby-show!
See the kitten on the wall,
Sporting with the leaves that fall.
Withered leaves—one—two—and three—
From a lofty elder tree!
Through the calm and frosty air
Of this morning bright and fair,
Eddying round and round they sink
Softly, slowly; one might think,
From the motions that are made,
Every little leaf conveyed
Sylph or Faery hither tending.—
. . . . . .
—But the kitten, how she starts,
Crouches, stretches, paws and darts!
First at one, and then its fellow
Just as light and just as yellow;

There are many now—now one—
Now they stop, and there are none.
What intenseness of desire
In her upward eye of fire!
With a tiger-leap half-way
Now she meets the coming prey,
Lets it go as fast, and then
Has it in her power again:
Now she works with three or four,
Like an Indian conjuror;
Quick as he in feats of art,
Far beyond in joy of heart.

The only remarkable lines in the above, though the whole is very pretty, are the lines describing the look of the kitten —"What intenseness of desire in her upward eye of fire." These are often quoted and admired. Now, the picture having been painted, the poet goes on to reflect that the kitten, wonderful as her jumping and catching must seem to any one watching it, never thinks of trying to show how clever she is, never thinks about who is looking at her, nor cares whether anybody is looking at her. It would be just the same, he says, if a thousand people looked at her or if nobody looked. She is a perfect little athlete, a wonderful little conjuror, the most graceful and pretty and funny little creature, but what she is doing she is doing out of the joy of her own heart, out of the pure delight that the exercise gives her. We have here a suggestion as to the duty of the poet, the man of letters. He should not try to write something beautiful only in order to make people praise him and to show how clever he is, but he should write what is beautiful out of pure love of beauty and of truth, without caring whether anybody likes it or does not like it.

But the incident suggests more than this to Wordsworth, as he stands there before the kitten with his own baby daughter in his arms. The delight that the child feels at seeing the kitten jumping and catching is quite as wonderful and as beautiful a thing in its own way, as the pranks of the

little animal. Both the jumping of the kitten and the laughing of the child proceed from pure gladness of heart.

Such a light of gladness breaks
Pretty kitten! from thy freaks,—
Spreads with such a living grace
O'er my little Dora's face;
Yes, the sight so stirs and charms
Thee, Baby, laughing in my arms
That almost I could repine
That your transports are not mine,
That I do not wholly fare
Even as ye do, thoughtless pair!
I will have my careless season
Spite of melancholy reason,
Will walk through life in such a way
That, when time brings on decay,
Now and then I may possess
Hours of perfect gladsomeness.
—Pleased by any random toy;
By a kitten's busy joy,
Or an infant's laughing eye
Sharing in the ecstasy.
I would fare like that or this,
Find my wisdom in my bliss;
Keep the sprightly soul awake,
And have faculties to take,
Even from things by sorrow wrought,
Matter for a jocund thought,
Spite of care and spite of grief,
To gambol with Life's falling Leaf.

Simply worded as this is, it will make you think a good deal if you read it carefully. For the poet is preaching to us an excellent sermon upon the way to find real happiness. And that way is to sacrifice pride. The kitten is not proud of her grace and her beauty, and she does not want praise, and she is able to find joy in playing with the simplest thing, even a dead leaf. And the child, in babyhood, thinks nothing about praise or profit; she can be quite happy without ever troubling her mind as to what other people think.

The least little thing makes her happy, makes her laugh; and the sight of the kitten jumping gives her more joy than you or I would receive from watching the greatest of dramatic performances. To be perfectly happy in a relative sense, one should keep something of the freshness of the child in one's heart, and something of the independence of the kitten. Poets and great artists really do this. There is also this suggestion—that we should be able, at any time of life, to take some pleasure in little things. Many of us are too proud to do this; we imagine that the sight of a kitten at play, or the little devices of children at play, are not worthy subjects for our mature minds. Yet this is a great mistake. The man who can not find honest pleasure in little things, never can be happy, and never can do anything really great in literature or in art. Little things that are mean, bad, contemptible, we should not trouble ourselves with, but of little things that are beautiful there are thousands all about us, and not to see them, not to love them, is decidedly a great misfortune. Even much more than this might be said about Wordsworth's reflections on the kitten.

Indeed, it may be said that the man who can not find pleasure in little things can not be, in the best sense of the word, a good father. To be a good father one must be capable of understanding and of sympathising with the pleasures and the play of a child. Great poets who are commonly said to retain all their lives something of child-character, have been famous in many cases for their comprehension of child nature; and the same may be said of great men of letters in other departments of literature. Victor Hugo has become widely famous for his poems of child life; and he was himself a model parent. Many examples might be quoted. In later times Stevenson, the best novelist of his generation, and one of the finest masters of style in all English literature,—though he had no children of his own,—distinguished himself by writing "A Child's Garden of Verses,"—the most

wonderful book of its kind, in relation to child psychology, ever published in England. One would say that the terrible science of mathematics, at least, would have the effect of dulling sympathy with small and childish things—we should not expect to find a great mathematician playing with toys. But the best of all children's books ever made,—a book translated into almost all European languages,—"Alice in Wonderland," was written by a professor of mathematics, Charles Dodgson, one of the most learned, most reserved, and otherwise most unsociable of men, a person who was never kind except in the presence of children. Indeed it is the very greatest minds that seem to be able to find supreme pleasure in little things.

I said before that we have to make a distinction—that little things that are bad and ugly and immoral, ought not to get our attention at all. But in the case of a parent, even the smallest faults of a child ought to be seen and understood and, under particular circumstances, even sympathised with. Wordsworth has given us one illustration of the way in which a father ought to understand. You will find it in a poem called "Anecdote for Fathers"—a poem which was for a long time condemned by critics thoughtlessly as being absolute nonsense. Wordsworth did write a great deal of nonsense, but this poem is not nonsense at all. And those who called it nonsense only showed themselves incapable of understanding little things. I am sorry that even Taine, who in most cases is an admirable critic, spoke of this poem slightingly. After having justly condemned Wordsworth's habit of writing verse about anything and everything, he observes that when Wordsworth's little son happened to tell a lie, the father thought it was a good subject for a poem. But I wonder whether in this case the poem was read. This is the substance of the narrative, which is told in fifteen stanzas of four lines each—perhaps at too great length. Wordsworth is walking out in the country with his little son; the day is very beautiful, and it occurs

to him to ask the boy whether he likes to be in the country or by the seashore on so fine a day. The boy, who is only five years old, answers that he would rather be by the sea.

"Now, little Edward, say why so:
My little Edward, tell me why."—
"I cannot tell, I do not know."—
"Why, this is strange," said I.

"For, here are woods, hills smooth and warm,
There surely must some reason be
Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm
For Kilve by the green sea."

At this, my boy hung down his head,
He flushed with shame, nor made reply;
And three times to the child I said,
"Why, Edward, tell me why?"

His head he raised—there was in sight,
It caught his eye, he saw it plain—
Upon the house-top glittering bright,
A broad and gilded vane.

Then did the boy his tongue unlock,
And eased his mind with this reply:
"At Kilve there was no weathercock;
And that's the reason why."

If any of you have been in the habit of talking to little children, child brothers or sisters, you ought to be able to understand this. When the father first asks the boy, "Which do you like best, the seashore or these beautiful fields?"—then the boy answers truthfully, "the seashore." But when the father asks him why he likes the seashore best, then he can not answer. A child can always express truthfully some dislike or some liking, but he is not always able to explain the reason of either. For example, a child will say, "I do not like that man," and it is no use to ask him why; he is speaking from instinct, therefore he can not tell. Now the charm of the seashore is also something which he

can not explain; the bright salt air, the smell of seaweed, the shapes of the sand, the mysterious motion and noise of the waves, all these make the charm, but he can not tell how or why. Then the father, only wishing to make him talk, says, "O, but you must have a reason, tell me why—why—why." Then the little fellow is ashamed—imagines that he has said something foolish—wants to please his father by trying to explain the unexplainable; and out of innocence and timidity tells a foolish little lie, suggested by the first thing that he sees—"I like the sea best because there is no weather-cock on the seashore." If you force a child to explain what he can not explain, he will tell a little lie; and you must not be angry with him, for he is doing this only in the hope of pleasing you, only because he is ashamed, and wants to say something. Wordsworth understood the situation immediately; it only made him love his boy the more. But some people would have scolded the child and said, "How dare you tell me such a lie!" The fault, if any fault there was, was with the parent. He had asked "Why?" The child had truthfully replied, "I can not tell—I do not know"; and then the parent had persisted, saying, "But you must have a reason." Then the boy blushed, thinking, "Father believes that I am not telling the truth, so I must try to tell him something that he will believe."

Several other poems by Wordsworth are famous, not only as poems, but as studies in child psychology. I think that some of you must have read the poem entitled "We Are Seven." It was an incident which occurred during his long country walks, that inspired Wordsworth to write this poem, one of his earliest "lyrical ballads." He meets in the country a little girl playing alone, and talks to her as a grown-up person commonly talks to children when he feels, and wishes to show that he feels, sympathy with them. Under such circumstances we commonly begin by asking, "How old are you?—What is your name, dear?—Have you any brothers or sisters?" The little girl questioned by Wordsworth, a

little peasant girl, told him that she was eight years old, and that she had six brothers and sisters. "We are seven in all," she said. Then he questioned her a little more, and she told him that two of the brothers had gone to a distant town, that two others had become sailors, that one brother and one sister were buried in the neighbouring churchyard, and that she now lived with her mother. The poet thought it lonesome for her, and remarked sympathetically—

"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven!—I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be."

Then did the little Maid reply,
"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the churchyard lie,
Beneath the churchyard tree."

"You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the churchyard laid,
Then ye are only five."

Why does the poet tell the little girl that her limbs are alive? Because he has perceived from her answer that she does not understand the difference between life and death. Children do not understand death at all up to a certain age—which may vary according to the innocence of the little mind. Even when the loving mother dies, a child of five or six years will not understand what has really happened. The child will grieve terribly, may sometimes even die of sorrow, but this is only because of the knowledge that he will never see his mother again, never feel her caress. That is all. The really cruel fact is quite unknown. Therefore we often find children exclaiming as they walk along a street, "O, there is brother!"—or, "there is little sister!"—referring to some dead brother or sister whom they imagine they see among the people passing by. Then we say, "O,

no—you are mistaken; that is a stranger." The child then acknowledges his mistake, but does not think that it would be at all impossible to see the dead person. That is one form of child-innocence. Wordsworth thought that he would try to reason the matter with that little peasant girl, who, being eight years old, ought to be able to understand. And he argues with her; but she always answers, "No, we are seven." He talks about the two who are buried. She answers, "O, yes! their graves are quite near our house, so that I can go there sometimes and sing to them. And when I have a chance," she adds, "I take my supper to the graveyard and eat it beside the graves." "But," the poet protests, "your brother and sister are in heaven; therefore, how can you talk about your being seven?"

> 'Twas throwing words away; for still
> The little Maid would have her will,
> And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

Nobody could make her understand what death means except by such cruelty as no gentle nature could possibly think about.

In the quiet country valley where Wordsworth lived he found many such incidents of life among the peasants to furnish him poetic subjects. For example, one very cold winter a little girl was lost in the snow, and that sad occurrence has given him the subject of the ballad "Lucy Gray." Again he makes a child whose cloak became entangled in a wagon-wheel the subject of the poem of "Alice Fell"—not so good, but striking in its way. These are very well known; and I refer to them only to illustrate Wordsworth's capacity in the interpretation of child-life.

I now want to speak of some poems dealing with adult emotion—the emotions of love and grief and regret. Of sexual love there is scarcely anything in Wordsworth; but love of children, love of kindred, and love of country and friends—these forms of affection have found in his verse the

most beautiful expression which English poetry can offer.

About the following there is a Japanese simplicity which I think you will appreciate, because I have read various Japanese poems much resembling it—not in form, but in feeling. It might be the love of a boy for a girl, before the time at which a boy would know what love means; or it might be the love of a brother for a sister, so pure it is and so touching.

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
  Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
  And very few to love!

A violet by a mossy stone
  Half hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star, when only one
  Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
  When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
  The difference to me!

This needs no explanation or paraphrase, but how pretty it is, how touching, how truly a bit of world-poetry! The very little that is said means so much more to us than many elaborate pages could mean—the whole story of this charming country girl, obscurely loving, and obscurely loved. And it reminds us of one of the sad things of existence—namely, that the most beautiful things of life never can be largely known. We think the persons whom we most love —our fathers, mothers, sisters, sweethearts—better than anybody else's. Jests have been made about this very natural weakness of human nature. But is it really weakness? and is it really foolish? I am inclined to think that it is not. The persons whom we love best are really better to us than any other human beings could be, and the best side of their souls or nature is shown only to us. No human being is

exactly the same to all other human beings. We can not show the best and kindest side of us without great caution and long experience. In the household all experience exists for us, and we know that caution is quite unnecessary; therefore at home we can be our true selves. This is possible also in the case of a betrothed maiden and her lover. Elsewhere it is not possible. So it may be said that we can see the best side of human hearts only at home, and there we really do see it, and it is not unreasonable that we should consider those we love superior to all other human beings. They are that for us—though for us only. Everybody, soon or late, comes to feel this, and having felt it, one must also feel a little sad at the thought that the most beautiful hearts and minds which we know can never be known to anybody but ourselves. The consolation is, of course, that everybody has the same experience. But this is something of a digression. Please observe in the foregoing poem that the whole effect is given by a single interjection. The exclamation "Oh," means everything, coming as it does before the childishly simple phrase about the "difference." The girl is dead, and the world is changed thereby to one mind —the sun is not now so joyous and bright as it used to be, nor are the fields so green, nor the sky so blue. But the great world of humanity knows nothing about what has happened, and would not care if it did know.

Friendship is, however, a dearer emotion to Wordsworth than romantic love, and he gets plenty of inspiration from it. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of his house there was a little school, and the poet made a friendship with the old schoolmaster. They used to take long walks together, climbing the hills and wandering into the woods. They told each other all their ideas, and Wordsworth has preserved for us several touching things which the old man said. One example is furnished by the poem entitled "The Two April Mornings."

We walked along, while bright and red
Uprose the morning sun;
And Matthew stopped, he looked, and said,
"The will of God be done!"

. . . . . .

"Yon cloud with that long purple cleft
Brings fresh into my mind
A day like this which I have left
Full thirty years behind.

"And just above yon slope of corn
Such colours, and no other,
Were in the sky, that April morn,
Of this the very brother.

"With rod and line I sued the sport
Which that sweet season gave,
And, to the churchyard come, stopped short
Beside my daughter's grave.

"Nine summers had she scarcely seen,
The pride of all the vale;
And then she sang;—she would have been
A very nightingale.

"Six feet in earth my Emma lay;
And yet I loved her more,
For so it seemed, than till that day
I e'er had loved before."

The morning is an April morning, and the curious shape of a cloud in the sky reminds the old man of another April morning, thirty years before, when he had seen another cloud of the same kind. And the cloud memory reminds him of a sadder memory; for on that morning thirty years before, when returning from a fishing trip, he had stopped a moment to visit the grave of his little daughter who had died at the age of nine. But there is nothing very extraordinary in the fact of visiting a daughter's grave on a particular morning, to make a man remember the experience with pain

after a period of thirty long years. Why did he sorrowfully remember that particular morning? Something else must have happened to make the memory so sharp—something much more impressive than the vision of a purple cloud. This was it:

"And, turning from her grave, I met,
Beside the churchyard yew,
A blooming girl, whose hair was wet
With points of morning dew.

"A basket on her head she bare;
Her brow was smooth and white:
To see a child so very fair,
It was a pure delight!

"No fountain from its rocky cave
E'er tripped with foot so free;
She seemed as happy as a wave
That dances on the sea.

"There came from me a sigh of pain
Which I could ill confine;
I looked at her, and looked again:
And did not wish her mine!"

Not a ghost, this lovely girl with dewdrops in her hair, and fair skin and bare feet, standing in the morning sun—not a ghost, but a charming living creature, much more beautiful even than the dead girl. It was a joy merely to look at her. But why did the old man say, "I looked at her and looked again, *and did not wish her mine*"? There might be several explanations. You may guess for yourselves, if you wish. One would say that a bereaved father under such circumstances would very much wish to have so beautiful a creature in his house, to take the place of his dead child. Another poem gives the explanation. It is called "The Fountain."

We talked with open heart and tongue,
Affectionate and true,
A pair of friends, though I was young,
And Matthew seventy-two.

Old Matthew in this poem tells his friend many things of his life, his sorrows, the death of all who loved him. And the poet, out of sympathy, exclaims—

"And, Matthew, for thy children dead
I'll be a son to thee!"
At this he grasped my hand, and said,
"Alas! that can not be."

This explains the other poem. He did not wish the beautiful girl whom he had seen at the churchyard to be his daughter for the very same reason that he said to Wordsworth, "Alas! that can not be." No matter how beautiful or strong or wise, or good or fair, or loving, or loyal, no child not our own can ever be to us exactly the same as our own child; and no living stranger can ever take the place of the dead. Supposing even that the bereaved father had adopted the fair child whom he had seen in the churchyard, he never could have loved her as he had loved the dead, nor could she ever have understood him so truly as his own child. Nor is this all; for the poem is very deeply suggestive. The presence of the living beauty in the house would prove constantly a reminder to the father of the other girl in the grave; the sound of her step, the tone of her voice, would recall another footstep and another voice, and would compel comparisons not to the advantage of the adopted child. Thirdly, one who very deeply loves a dead person, feels that it would be a sort of unkindness to the dead to allow any living person to take the empty place. In brief, the loss of a child is irretrievable, irreparable, inconsolable; and Matthew's words simply presented this plain fact to the poet's mind, in so strong but new a way that he never could forget the utterance. Wherefore he says:

Matthew is in his grave, yet now
Methinks I see him stand,
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding in his hand.

Apparently they had been collecting flowers together; Wordsworth could not perhaps have told you what the flowers were—so long ago that happened. But he remembered the bough in the old man's hand, because it was just after cutting it that Matthew told him about the memory of the first April morning and the vision of the beautiful girl in the graveyard. Common truths seldom strike our minds forcibly until they are presented to us in some relation to human pain.

Love of country, especially of one's native home, is another subject beautifully touched by Wordsworth. In the last poem which I repeated to you, memory is revived by the sight of a purple cloud of curious shape in the spring sky. In the next poem which I shall quote, we have an example of memory vividly and painfully reawakened by the song of a bird. The best known English singing bird is the thrush, and in some parts of the country it is very pleasant of a spring or summer morning to hear the thrushes sing. They do not sing so well in cages, but they can be tamed, and are often sold like other singing birds. A servant girl walking in the gloomy streets of London hears a caged thrush singing in front of a shop. It startles her to hear the song of the bird in that place, and she stops to listen. And as she stops, the song of the little creature brings back to her mind the sunny country village where she played as a child. She no longer sees the ugly streets; she no longer hears the roar of London; now she sees flowers and trees and flowing water, and smells the sweet smell of hay and hawthorn blossoms. But only for a moment.

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven; but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade:
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colours have all passed away from her eyes!

The part of London referred to here by the poet is the most gloomy, most crowded and busy of the city districts. It is in the middle of this busy place that the girl has heard the caged bird sing the song that reminds her of her peasant home in the country. She imagines that she sees again the beautiful mists of a summer morning—that is what the poet means by the "bright volumes of vapour." The reference to the pail—meaning probably a milk pail—indicates her former occupation on her father's farm. But it is only for a second that she can see all this; presently she can see only the dusty pavement, and hear only the roar of the traffic.

Yet in Wordsworth's time London was not what it is to-day—a city of six million people, the most awful and the most gloomy of all cities in the world. The date of the poem is 1797, more than a hundred years ago. London was then not more than a quarter of its present size; there were green fields and valleys all about it, which have long since disappeared under square miles of solid masonry. I do not think that any mortal man could find objective beauty in London to-day, though he might find beauty of another kind. But in Wordsworth's day it was not impossible, and one of his most famous short poems is a description of London as seen from Westminster Bridge. The date of this poem is 1802.

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Architecturally, Westminster Bridge is now much more beautiful than it was in Wordsworth's day; the modern structure is of steel and stone, and is made to harmonise in style with the splendid Houses of Parliament which are situated immediately next to the bridge. Yet notwithstanding the magnificence of the neighbouring architecture, to-day all the neighbourhood of Westminster Bridge has a dark and gloomy aspect, caused by the heavy atmosphere and smoke of London. As for green fields, you would now have to take a railroad train to reach them from Westminster Bridge—or at least a steamer—for they are very far away. Also, the Thames at Westminster is now confined between high embankments of stone, and it is not at all beautiful, but very dirty and black. Reading this poem only enables us to imagine what the scene may have been like a hundred years ago. It is a fine piece of composition, severely beautiful, and such as even Tennyson would not have been ashamed of. The adjective "bare" refers to the clear appearance of objects seen in the morning atmosphere; they appear without any mists, sharp and clear of outline. Such clear air is never seen in London to-day. Of course it is quite impossible to describe in a few lines the multitudinous details of a city view; even if it were not impossible, the result would probably prove confusing or tire-

some. But the poet's sudden exclamation of delight—"Dear God!"—conveys his own emotion to any person reading the poem who has seen the place described, and enables the reader who knows London to remember very vividly the effect of morning sunlight upon the miles of masonry, the broad river, and the waiting ships. Also the expression "mighty heart," referring to the great metropolis as the heart of the industrial life of England, has been justly admired. It was but little later that the great German poet Heine, visiting England, spoke of London as the "world's pyloric artery."

This much of Wordsworth, as illustrative of his methods of finding beauty in simple and common things, ought to interest the student in his lighter work. The main object of this short lecture has been to call attention to this lighter work rather than to the more serious verse. But something must be said, even in the shortest lecture, about his deeper poetry, because of its vast influence upon the poetry of the Victorian period. However, before we speak of that, I want to tell you again that it is of no use to try to read the whole of Wordsworth,—to read him, for example, in a volume like this—nearly a thousand pages of small type, two columns to the page. The best selection from Wordsworth is perhaps that of Matthew Arnold; and you will find in any anthology, from that of Palgrave to that of Quiller-Couch, an excellent selection of the best things. The student ought not to waste time by attempting to read more than a selection from Wordsworth; because the greater part of his work is not good, and very much of it is rubbish.

Now, to speak of the more serious poetry, I may first observe that you need not pay much attention to the sonnets. Wordsworth wrote an immense, even an extraordinary, number of sonnets, and the majority of them might just as well not have been written at all. Certainly you would do well to read none of the sonnets except those which you may find selected for reading by some great critics, such as Arnold

or Palgrave. In serious poetry Wordsworth chiefly succeeded in blank verse. Much of "The Excursion" and much of several other blank verse compositions are worthy of very close study, though even these can best be studied through selection. Wordsworth is splendid only for a few hundred lines together. On the other hand, Tennyson is splendid through a hundred pages of blank verse, more splendid than Wordsworth. Nevertheless, if Wordsworth had not existed, Tennyson could never have been so great. Very much of Tennyson's finest inspiration came directly from Wordsworth, though he was also much influenced by Keats. In order to give you an idea of how Wordsworth at his best can be compared with Tennyson, let me quote a few lines describing the sensations of a skater on a beautiful winter night:

> All shod with steel
> We hissed along the polished ice, in games
> Confederate, imitative of the chase
> And woodland pleasures—the resounding horn,
> The pack loud-chiming, and the hunted hare.
> So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
> And not a voice was idle: with the din
> Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
> The leafless trees and every icy crag
> Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills
> Into the tumult sent an alien sound
> Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,
> Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
> The orange sky of evening died away.

To any person who has skated upon clear winter evenings the truth, not less than the beauty, of these lines makes powerful appeal. The rest of the poem is all equally fine, so fine that perhaps nothing in English is better; but this is only a matter of about a hundred lines. I have quoted it particularly because I want you to compare it with a description in Tennyson's "Passing of Arthur," where the bold Sir Bedivere is carrying the body of the wounded king to

the ruined church by the lake shore. That magnificent description in Tennyson is actually based upon these lines of Wordsworth. You will find not only every simile there, but every word of significance which Wordsworth uses—"smitten," "din," "icy crag," etc. You may prefer the work of Tennyson; it is grander, because the conception is grander. But Wordsworth is not describing anything heroic, nothing but a happy company of students skating on a river. Out of that description of skating students, however, Tennyson obtained inspiration for the very finest passage in the whole of the "Idyls of the King," and that shows very well what value can be found in Wordsworth's best work by a fine judge of poetry.

One word more about Wordsworth's studies of childhood. You may wonder why I have not quoted to you anything from the famous "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," for this, although on the subject of child-feeling, is one of the very greatest of his efforts in serious and stately verse. One reason is that I believe many of you have already studied the poem in government schools; another reason is that the real beauty of the composition is much more a beauty of workmanship than a beauty of thought, and therefore less likely to serve a good purpose of illustration in this short lecture. But I may say at least a few words about it. Unless you have been fully told all about the Christian ideas behind it, you might mistake the poet's meaning very easily. The general subject of the poem is this—in childhood we see everything more brightly, and find more pleasure and joy and beauty in the world than we do as men. Why should this be? Perhaps, answers the poet, it is because the soul of the child still remembers a more beautiful world in which it lived before birth.

Scientific criticism has sadly ridiculed this presentation of the facts, and the theory with which Wordsworth attempted to explain them. It is quite true that children feel more joy and delight in sunshine, in flowers, in playing

among the fields than grown-up people do; but this is not because they really perceive and feel more keenly than adults. As a matter of fact, a child can not see or feel so deeply as a grown-up person, and the senses of the child are comparatively undeveloped. No little child can possibly understand the beauty of a landscape, the beauty of clouds, the beauty of running water, for to comprehend and to see such beauty requires much more experience than a child possesses. That is why one of Wordsworth's critics calls this poem nonsense. I am afraid the critic was quite right. A child does indeed see things with a pleasure which we cannot feel, but that is because the same things which please the child have become familiar to us—we know more about them than the child does, to whom they are new and strange. It is also true that intuition, the instinctive sense or knowledge of good and evil, danger or safety, is much more vivid in the child than with grown-up persons, for grown-up persons are trained to use their reason in opposition to their feeling, and the child, with no reasoning power yet developed, has only feelings to guide him. Again it is true that a child can notice details in small things which escape us; but that is because the child gives all his attention to little things, remaining incapable of observing contrast, of imagining general laws. Lastly, it is true that the mind of a child is most beautiful, delicate, imaginative; but that is because the child, like the savage, who is also a poet, sees things in a peculiar way, a ghostly way, imagining rocks, trees, flowers to be alive—to think and feel like himself. A child can tell you wonderful things about a chair or a table, because he thinks of them in a fetishistic way,—imagines them sentient. But to say that a child can see or feel the beauty of nature more than a grown person, more than a poet or an artist, is not true. Certain forms of beauty, the highest, a child can not see at all. He sees things differently, but not by any means better than we do.

Now as for the theory of remembering pre-existence, you

will have noticed that Wordsworth was half afraid to utter his theory; he apologises for it at the beginning of his poem, and tries to prove that it is not contrary to Christian beliefs. If Wordsworth had been able to think the thoughts of a later time, and had bravely stated that the mind of a child proves the remembrance of other lives possible, then, I think, he would have been quite right. That way of studying child-psychology has some scientific foundation. But Wordsworth's theory is, not that a child can remember former lives in the body, but that a child remembers having been in heaven, in Paradise. The idea from which Wordsworth worked is a very old one in the Christian world, though not much expressed by Protestant writers. It is that a separate soul is newly made for every new body—made in heaven by God, and then sent down to earth into the mother's womb. I do not mean that this is a dogma; I mean only that it is an opinion expressed by old ecclesiastical writers. As soon as a child is conceived upon earth, then God in heaven creates a soul for that child and sends it down; and Wordsworth's idea is that, during its rapid passage from heaven to earth, the little soul keeps remembrance of something that it was allowed to see in heaven. Neither as science nor as metaphysics does this poem bear criticism, but it is a beautiful piece of musical composition, and contains many lines which will never die.

CHAPTER VIII

COLERIDGE

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was as much the opposite of Wordsworth in character as any man could be. He was excessively sensitive, imaginative, emotional; he had no force of character whatever, and was incapable even of taking care of himself. Weak and erratic, latterly a prey to the vice of opium, he passed his whole life wandering about from place to place, begging for charity of friends, and finally dying in a state of utter misery.

He was born in 1772, the son of a clergyman. As a child he was petted and perhaps spoiled a little, by the love of his parents, but, under any circumstances, he never could have developed much force of character or of body. He had inherited over-sensibility, and even in the time of boyhood, he could not act like other children, so that at school he was made very unhappy. He showed wonderful ability at study, reading Greek easily and even translating difficult Greek poetry at the age of fifteen. But he had few companions or friends, and gave all his time to reading instead of playing. Yet as an illustration of his eccentric character, it may be remarked that in the middle of his school-course he wanted to give up study, and to become a shoemaker! When he went to the university of Cambridge, he did something just as queer. Although the most promising student of his class, he ran away in the middle of the term, and enlisted as a common soldier in a cavalry regiment in London. Nobody knew at the university what had become of him for more than two months. Then he was discovered, and his friends bought his freedom. There are several curious stories about how he was found. One is that he heard some officers of his regiment talking about

the Greek poet Euripides, and that he corrected a mistake which one of them had made in attempting to quote Euripides from memory. This may or may not be true, but Coleridge was certainly capable of doing it. The university proved very kind to him; he was only reprimanded, and allowed to proceed with his studies. But the studies were never concluded, for reasons which will presently appear.

Among Coleridge's university friends was the poet Robert Southey, a student at Oxford. Both of these young men were under the spell of an idealism which then influenced many minds—the dream of a perfect human society, a perfect communism, in which there was to be a great deal of intellectual and philosophical enjoyment, with very little hard work. It was an era of wild theories. Southey and Coleridge determined to establish what they called a "Pantisocracy" in the solitudes of America. The society was to consist of about thirty gentlemen and thirty ladies; every member was to contribute one hundred and twenty-five pounds; there was to be no government, but a sort of communal regulation only; and all property was to be in common. As for the marriage question, measures might be adopted allowing the members to dissolve their marriages in case the bond proved less pleasant than had been expected—and nobody was to be obliged to work more than three or four hours a day.

Of course such a scheme was not likely to succeed under any circumstances; many such schemes were actually tried in America at a later day by much more capable persons than these two young students, and they failed. But the lads were very earnest, and they made up their minds that in order to prepare for their undertaking, it was necessary to get married as soon as possible. Southey introduced Coleridge to the daughters of a respectable friend in trade; and the result was that the two young men married two of the young ladies. But this naturally ended the university course; both left without taking their degree. Unfortu-

nately, worse things were in store for them. Southey was immediately disinherited by a rich relative, and there was nothing in the world for either of the bridegrooms to do but to get employment at once, so as to support themselves and their families. Southey was really a noble and strong man, in spite of his youthful follies, and marriage sobered him. He was soon able to do very well, and did well all his life. Coleridge, on the other hand, never was able to support either his wife or himself, and always lived upon the kindness of friends.

Now there are thousands of extraordinary stories about Coleridge, but I have said enough to suggest to you what the weak side of his character was. Nevertheless you must not think harshly of him. He had no strong side to his character at all; but he had a beautiful side, and he was always loved even by those who despised his weakness. He had a marvellous capacity for making himself agreeable by mere natural effort, without any hypocrisy; he had a magical tongue, and nobody could resist the charm of his eloquence; and last, but not least, he was intensely amiable, incapable of being unkind or malicious with intention. We might compare him to one who remained all his life in the state of childhood, seeking caresses, seeking love, supremely innocent of practical matters, and totally incapable of helping himself. Indeed, his friends treated him after the manner of a pet child; and if you should ever take the pains to read his letters to them, you will observe that he writes just like a child, just as innocently, as emotionally, and as foolishly.

But this is not the whole of Coleridge, who was in some respects one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived. The great German poet and philosopher, Goethe, said of Byron, "when he begins to think, he is a child." Byron was the most manly and aggressive of beings in real literary and social life, but he could not give anything new to philosophy; as a thinker, he was indeed only a child. Now with

Coleridge exactly the contrary fact obtained. Coleridge was a child in his life, in his helplessness in his weaknesses; but when he sat down to think, he was a very great thinker. He was so much of a thinker that he was able to influence the whole intellect of England in matters of religious feeling. This work does not belong to his poetry; it belongs to his prose, and we can not give it much attention here. But I can say that, in the opinion of excellent judges, the great religious movement, called the Oxford movement, in which so many great English names were afterwards to figure, was very largely caused by Coleridge. German philosophy, Greek philosophy, and mediæval philosophy equally attracted this extraordinary mind, and were equally absorbed into it. If Coleridge never could give us a philosophical system, he could at least give us astonishing flashes of great thought upon the most difficult subjects, psychological and other; and there are very few deep thinkers of our own age who have not at some time or other made quotations from his work. Now you will perceive better what a strange being he must have been.

Is it not then extraordinary to think of Coleridge as the companion and fellow-worker of Wordsworth, through a period of years? There could only have been two possible consequences of such a partnership. One was that Coleridge should be dominated by the cold strong character of Wordsworth; the other was that Wordsworth should have been bewitched by the eloquence and the sympathetic charm of Coleridge. And both of these things actually happened. Wordsworth was always, as might be expected, the master; and when he gave Coleridge very plainly to understand that he wished certain work to be done in a certain way, or not done at all, Coleridge wrote so like Wordsworth, that you could not tell the poetry of one from the poetry of the other. On the other hand, when Wordsworth told Coleridge, "Do as you please, write in your own way," then Coleridge would produce such novel and beautiful things as the "Rime of

the Ancient Mariner," or "Christabel." Wordsworth never would have allowed any man really to influence him, but Coleridge was able to charm him, to please him, and to suggest to him a great number of beautiful thoughts—that was why he endured him.

Many other persons besides Wordsworth would have been glad to endure Coleridge, and to pay him a very handsome salary for writing so much a year. Could he have been made to work steadily, he would have been a fortune to any publisher. But sustained effort was not in his nature at any time, and from about the middle of his life he became a prey to opium, a vice which renders sustained effort almost impossible. All that he ever did was accordingly done by fits and starts, in fragments, in shreds, in patches. Even the poems which had made him famous, are, with one exception, incomplete; and if the "Ancient Mariner" happens to be complete, the fact is possibly due to the power of Wordsworth over Coleridge in the days before Coleridge became an opium-eater.

Let us say a word about the extraordinarily small quantity of this work. If you look at the one volume edition of Coleridge's poems published by Macmillan, you will find that there are more than seven hundred pages in the book, and you might be deceived by the bulk of it into supposing that Coleridge wrote a great deal of poetry. But on examination you would observe that half of the volume is made up of notes, biography, and reprints of the variations in the text of different editions. Of the remaining half, two-thirds at least represents dramas and translations; and of the few pages devoted to poetry proper, there are much less than a hundred having any value. The fact is that Coleridge wrote only about twenty-two hundred lines of good poetry; but those two thousand and two hundred lines are such poetry that there is nothing greater in English past or present, and can scarcely be anything greater in the English of the future.

Fifteen hundred lines of the amount above mentioned represent the great poem—greatest of all Coleridge's work—the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Six hundred lines represent the fragment of "Christabel." Then we have the very short fragment, "Kubla Khan." The rest of the amount is given by the poem "Love," an exquisite ballad. Everybody ought to know these four compositions. But outside of them there is scarcely anything of value in Coleridge as a whole; you must pick out verses here and there in order to find additional beauty. There are, for example, in the ballad of "The Three Graves," in the fragment entitled "The Dark Ladie," etc., beautiful passages; but the work, considered as a whole, is far below the level of the four masterpieces mentioned. I know that you may find a few other wonderful things, but they are not original. The magnificent dithyramb, called "The Visit of the Gods," is not an imitation, but an actual translation from Schiller; the wonderful little verses which teach English students the meaning of the terms of prosody, such as this—

> In the hexameter rises the fountain's silvery column;
> In the pentameter aye falling in melody back,

are, with one exception, translated from the German. For Coleridge, I am sorry to say, was sometimes a plagiarist. There is no more poetry to speak of; but there is one splendid, matchless, piece of weird prose, "The Wanderings of Cain." This extraordinary production, comparable to nothing else in English literature except the prose poetry of Blake, which it surpasses, is unfortunately a fragment also. Coleridge never finished any composition longer than a ballad. But perhaps this really makes the charm, or adds to the charm, of certain fragments. Imagination is thus excited without being satisfied, and you know that some of the best work of Poe is purposely put into fragmentary form.

Now let us see what Coleridge did for English literature, with only two thousand-odd lines of verse. No other mod-

ern poet, not one, has had so great and so lasting an influence. That you may judge the extent of the influence, listen to the following facts. First of all, Scott, having heard "Christabel" recited to him before it was published, adopted the metre, wrote his "Lay of the Last Minstrel" in imitation, and founded all the mass of his narrative poetry upon the same basis. Byron did the very same thing—and, mind you, before "Christabel" had been published at all! Indeed, it was Byron who induced Murray to publish it. Shelley, Keats, and after them nearly every other great poet of our time, have shown to some extent the influence of Coleridge. There is a great deal of Coleridge in the early work even of Tennyson. There are traces of this influence in Browning. And, as for Rossetti, who hated the poetry of Wordsworth, he represents the very highest possible expression of Coleridge's teaching and inspiration.

Now what did Coleridge do? He invented a new form of verse, which everybody adopted after him. When I say invented, I mean in the ordinary and true sense of invention. As a matter of scientific fact, there is no such thing possible as invention in the vulgar understanding of that word. All invention is but a recombination of what has already been. The elements of Coleridge's invention existed, scattered through English poetry, long before he was born. But he was the first to weld them together so as to make an entirely new form of narrative poetry.

He invented a verse which is the most flexible and the most musical in which a story can possibly be told. The body of the verse is mostly lines of eight syllables; but these sometimes shrink up to four syllables only, and sometimes lengthen out to twelve syllables. Thus there is a range of from four to twelve. In rhyme the form is equally flexible. Rhymes may change places; they may double at will in the same line. Finally cadences change, and verse that is iambic for, say, half a page may then suddenly become trochaic. Thus every possible liberty which a poet could

wish for exists in this measure. Nothing is wanting. Alliteration and double rhymes give a particular richness to the verse, as in these examples—

In mist or *cloud*, on mast or *shroud*
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the *night*, through fog-smoke *white*,
Glimmered the white moonshine.

. . . . . .

The *f*air *b*reeze *blew*, the white *f*oam *flew*,
The *f*urrow *f*ollowed *f*ree,
We were the *first* that ever *burst*
Into that *s*ilent *s*ea.

. . . . . .

And ice mast-*high* came floating *by*,
As green as emerald.

. . . . . .

'Tis the middle of night by the *c*astle-*c*lock
And the owls have awakened the *c*rowing *c*ock.
Tu-whit!—tu-whoo!
And hark again, the *c*rowing *c*ock.
How drowsily it *c*rew!

The last example, from "Christabel," especially shows the elasticity of the verse.

Now we see the immense advantage that such a measure as this affords to narrative poetry. In the first place, monotony is avoided; and monotony is one of the main obstacles to most forms of narrative verse. Rhyme in narrative verse when copious is unbearable, except in short pieces; and even the Spenserian stanza has become intolerable to modern ears. But in the form imagined by Coleridge one has the opportunity of using rhyme, alliteration or different kinds of feet at will. To use rhymes constantly alternating in the same way would be tiresome; therefore the rhymes are made to alternate in a great variety of ways. At moments they are doubled, to give more musical effect; at other times they are reduced. The line may lengthen or shorten according to the tone of the emotion to be expressed; the cadences

can change according to change of feeling. No wonder that Scott and Byron availed themselves immediately of the new discovery. Yet neither of them could obtain the same effects with it as Coleridge did. Coleridge is always exquisite in this kind of verse; Byron never, and Scott only at occasional moments. You will observe also that nearly everything of value written by Coleridge is in this form, except the ballads. In the "Ancient Mariner" the form is least varied; in "Kubla Khan" the variation is most striking.

So much for the influence of Coleridge on prosody. But he had another influence also, of an even more far-reaching kind. He infused into poetry something new in tone, in feeling, in emotional expression. It is very hard to define this something precisely; you must be able to feel it. It is something ghostly. The feeling of the supernatural was expressed by Coleridge in a much finer way than it had been ever expressed by any one before. And it is the sentiment of the supernatural in Coleridge which afterwards so beautifully affected the imaginative work of Rossetti in directions that Coleridge never dreamed of.

CHAPTER IX

BYRON

Extremes of morality provoke a reaction, just as do extremes of immorality. Contrary to the vulgar proverb, there can be too much of a good thing. The namby-pamby morality of Richardson provoked a reaction in prose, headed by Fielding. We are now going to see how the same kind of reaction came into poetry during the next century. People were tired of the coldness and the speculative tendencies of poetry. They wanted passion instead of philosophy; they wanted human characters instead of ghosts. They did not say so, but they felt that way. Wordsworth did not give them anything which they could understand that was not tiresome. Coleridge and Scott and Southey gave them fairy-tales. And they were quite ready to listen to anybody else who could give them a change. Anything for a change—even a little immorality and a little atheism could not do much harm. There had been altogether too much talk about virtue and religion and the soul. When the Satanic School began to speak, the Lake School immediately ceased to interest the public at all. Everybody stopped even trying to read the Lake Poets, and Sir Walter Scott himself was obliged as early as 1814 to stop writing poetry. Byron had begun to sing his cynical and splendid song.

Byron is the chief figure of the Satanic School; and it is impossible to consider justly the history of this school without considering also the extraordinary lives of the men who belonged to it. We must therefore speak of Byron himself before we speak of his work. Byron was at once extraordinarily fortunate and unfortunate. Though of noble descent, and heir to a fortune, he had inherited from his an-

cestors characteristics of a most unhappy sort. On his father's side, for some time back, the race had morally degenerated. Byron's father, Captain Byron, was as handsome as he was wicked. He had been obliged to leave the army because of conducting himself in such a manner that no one of his brother officers would speak to him. He was not only a rake, a spendthrift and a drunkard; he had figured as an adulterer, having eloped with another man's wife, by whom he had had a child, Byron's half sister. Other male relations of the future poet were equally good for nothing. The nobleman from whom Byron inherited the estate was known all round the country as "the wicked lord." Byron's mother was of good family but intensely passionate, fretful, and vindictive in her disposition—a disposition which was aggravated by the treatment received from Byron's father. He had married her only to get her money, and having spent that in debauchery, he left the family by his death almost destitute. All these misfortunes so embittered Byron's mother that she often acted like an insane woman, and very probably she was, or had been made, a little insane. Even at the time of the boy's birth she acted wildly and foolishly, with the result that the foot of the child was deformed. With such parents, and with such ancestral tendencies to be reckoned with, Byron's future could not be altogether happy.

Yet he was unusually gifted in body as well as in mind, with the solitary exception of the injury to his foot. He was certainly one of the handsomest men of his time, having that dark type of beauty especially admired in England, perhaps because it is there less common than elsewhere. If he had inherited his father's beauty, he had also inherited something of his father's passions. But in youth these only seemed part of his natural charm; the intensity of his likes and dislikes, of his love or anger, did not appear to indicate anything sinister beyond the common. Perhaps Byron would never have been in any respect disrep-

utable, had he made a sensible marriage. He never was a spendthrift, and he had no disposition to ruin himself by debauchery. On the contrary, it was his hope to repair the fallen fortunes of the family. But his marriage ruined everything. He married a young woman of noble family, but of the most conventional turn of mind—cold, unsympathetic, unforgiving, and prudish to an extraordinary degree. In the case of a common person, a good or bad marriage may not signify very much; but in the case of an English lord, it is the most important act of his life. It means his future place in society; it means public opinion; it means, in short, good fortune or absolute ruin. When Byron's wife suddenly left her husband, and gave the world to believe that no honest woman could live with such a monster, Byron was doomed. All society immediately turned against him. He could not even live any longer in England. He was practically, for the rest of his life, a banished man. And he felt that this treatment was unjust. The world had condemned him without even listening to his story. They had listened only to his wife, and she had never been able to say why she had left him. She represented in herself all the convention and cant and hypocrisy of her age; and Byron naturally hated those characteristics of society which were impersonated in his wife. From childhood he had been a fighter, and he was not in the least afraid to fight society. For the remainder of his short life he struck back at that which had struck him, and struck very effectively. He attacked all the conventions, all the hypocrisies, all the moral commonplaces of English society in his poetry; he made heroic crime appear more attractive than cowardly virtue, and he even boldly ridiculed the religious beliefs that excused or sheltered social falsehood.

Unfortunately he did not content himself with attacking social shams in his poetry; he set an example of reckless living which appeared to more than justify all the bad things said about him. Byron's position was like this: "You said

I was immoral when I tried to live decently. Now I shall be immoral, and you can do as you please about it." Nor can the treatment to which he had been subjected justify his conduct in Italy and elsewhere. Shameless living is bad enough, but when cruelty is combined with shamelessness, we can feel no sympathy; and Byron was cruel to women —even at times brutally so. At length, however, his better nature asserted itself. There were two Byrons. One was naturally reckless, selfish, and sensual. The other was generous, heroic, and truly noble. The second Byron manifested himself after the death of his friend Shelley. He suddenly gave up writing poetry, and went to Greece to place his fortune and all his abilities at the disposal of the Greeks in order to help them obtain their liberty. He worked for them arduously, faithfully, and unselfishly, and died for the cause which he had espoused. Whatever may have been the faults of his life, his death was unquestionably the death of a hero.

Now let us take the facts of Byron's life in brief details. He was born in 1788, and was educated at Harrow and Cambridge, but left the university without taking a degree. While he was still a university student, he published his first book of poems, in 1807. The poems were not good, and were very severely criticised by the *Edinborough Review*. Byron resented the criticism by writing a satire, after the manner of Pope, not only upon his critics, but upon all the literary people of the day, including even Sir Walter Scott. The satire, entitled "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"—reckless and unjust though it was—proved that the young student had more than common talent, and gave him a certain amount of literary reputation. Then, leaving the university, he travelled in Europe for two years, obtaining the materials for the first part of his poem "Childe Harold," published in 1812. This gave him immediately a very great reputation, not less than seven editions being sold in little more than a month. His vogue had com-

menced. During the next three years—only three years, remember—he wrote and published "The Giaour," "The Bride of Abydos," "The Corsair," "Lara," and "The Siege of Corinth." The public went simply wild with delight; fourteen thousand copies of "The Corsair" alone were bought in one day. So far everything promised well for Byron's future. But then came the miserable marriage, in 1814, ending in 1815; and with the breaking of the marriage Byron's English work ends. Three months after his wife left him, he went to Italy and never came back. In Switzerland, Venice, Ravenna, Piso, and Genoa, he passed a considerable number of years, partly in company with young Shelley, of whose companionship we shall have to speak later. The better part of his work was all written during this time. Byron's Italian period gave us the dramas of "Manfred," "Cain," "Sardanapalus," and "Marino Faliero"; also the poems of "Beppo," "Mazeppa," "The Dream," "Darkness," and the wonderful but unfinished "Don Juan." This is the cream of Byron's work. In 1823 he gave up poetry forever and went on his Greek expedition. He died in 1824 at Missolonghi.

What was the value of this short, passionate, misdirected life? What did it bequeath to us? What was it that Byron did for English poetry?

The critical world is still fighting over these questions. But I think that they can now be fairly answered. The first fact for you to observe is that no poet ever had such vast and sudden popularity, not only in England, but all over Europe, as Byron. Such was his temporary influence that it crushed all competition out of existence. Nobody else could get a hearing while Byron sang. Nor is this all that is to be said about him. His influence chiefly made the French romantic movement. His influence was felt in Germany through the work of an infinitely greater poet than himself, the poet Heine. Furthermore, Spanish, Italian and Russian literatures were all influenced by Byron.

Goethe spoke of him as without any equal in the history of English poetry—indeed, he said more than this; he said that Byron was a European phenomenon, such as might not be seen again for hundreds of years. And yet, within a generation, this popularity ebbed and vanished. Byron is now scarcely read. It is true that at the very moment of this lecture a new edition of Byron's works is being given to the public; but I think that its success will be only of a limited kind. Byron is almost dead in our literature. All this seems very contradictory; but I think that it can be explained, and explained in a really interesting way.

Since I began lectures on the subject of literature, I have always tried to bring forward one fact relating to the creation of all great work in poetry or prose; and that one fact is the absolute necessity of patient self-control. Literature means hard work, no matter how much genius is behind it. And literature means the self-control necessary for hard work. I am not speaking here merely of moral self-control. There may be cases in which there is no right conduct in life, and nevertheless splendid conduct in work. But there is no escaping the general truth that moral and intellectual self-control go together; for the man who can not conquer himself in one direction is apt to find it very difficult to control himself in another. Now Byron is a striking example of this truth. The reason that his work is no longer read or valued, except by the young, is that it is nearly all done without patience, without self-control, and therefore without good taste or the true spirit of art. For all art requires the pain of sustained effort; and sustained effort in the highest sense was not possible to Byron. Indeed, towards the end of his life, he bravely confessed that he was not fit to be a poet, and that he had made a mistake in taking up poetry as a profession. What he said was perfectly true. Poetry requires qualities of character that did not exist in the nature of Byron. Endowed with a marvellous talent for writing in verse as easily as other men write in prose,

he poured out his poems as a bird pours out its song, almost without any other effort than the emotional expression, the emotional passion of the moment. Therefore he thought, on learning of his great success with the public, that passion —that is to say, emotion—was poetry; and he actually said so, more than once. This is a great mistake. Passion is not poetry. To utter one's feelings in verse is not poetry. That is only the beginning, the foundation, of a poem. So in making a bronze statue, the casting of the metal is only the beginning of the real work; after that there is the labour of correcting, smoothing, polishing. Byron never would do any careful revising, correcting, or polishing. He simply threw down his thoughts on paper, in easily rhyming lines, and left them in that shape for all time. Wherefor they remain defective for all time. Speaking of himself and his emotions, he said

> The cold in crime are cold in blood,
> Their passion scarce deserves the name;
> But mine was like the raging flood
> That boils in Ætna's breast of flame.

At least we have good reason to suppose that these lines refer to his own feelings, though they are put into the mouth of one of his heroes. Now the lava of a volcano is used for artistic purposes; but it has to be very carefully chosen, because it comes out of the crater mixed with all kinds of dross. And Byron's verse resembles lava by its heat and force, but it also resembles lava in being full of dross. You can scarcely find twenty lines of Byron's poetry which would be called perfect. There is splendour, the splendour of great genius, but splendour always in the shape of ore. The great genius never did its best, never tried to do its best, never could have done its best, because there was no power of patience or self-control to help it. Some critics to-day go so far as to say that Byron never wrote any real poetry at all. If they mean only absolute perfection of form, then

I fear we must acknowledge that Byron did not write any poetry in the higher sense. Evidently it is not to Byron's poetical art that we must look for any explanation of his immense influence. We must find another reason for it; and this will oblige us to make a little digression.

What did the world admire in Byron? Matthew Arnold said it was "immense sincerity and force." Byron has these, but I think that Matthew Arnold was wrong—that they could not explain his influence. Let us briefly note the character and the subjects of his work, and learn what these can tell us.

We can understand the first success of "Childe Harold" as being partly due to the subject. In those days travelling was difficult and expensive, and the English public knew very little about the Southern countries, Spain and Portugal, and Greece and Turkey. Italy and France were better known, but Italy had not been much written about by English men of letters. So the work of the young poet had all the charm of absolute novelty, as well as of certain melancholy beauty which still touches us while reading certain parts of it. A poem of the same kind written fifty years later would have attracted no attention at all. The succeeding poems—the narrative poems, such as "The Giaour," "Lara," "The Corsair," also interested the public by their novelty of subject and their vigorous verse, but these alone would not explain the immense popularity which they obtained. The fact was that a new style of character had been introduced into English poetry, a type of character comparable to nothing else remembered except the Satan of Milton. In all these poems there was a spirit of revolt against God and man, against human and divine law, a revolt maintained with colossal pride and colossal power. Like Satan, indeed; but unlike Satan in the fact of being human, not supernatural. People imagined that they saw something of Byron himself in these strange figures of renegades, pirates, and desperate adventurers. Curiosity as well

as sympathy was aroused. In former poems, heroic figures had been of a very different type; the human devil had not yet been invented—not a regular devil, but a sublime and gloomy figure, having the twofold charm of mystery and beauty. Next came plays, or dramas, such as "Manfred," and "Cain," in which conventional ideas were strangely upset by the glorification of strength and pride against law and religion. The figure of the rebel was always more or less the same; but the dress and the accessories were sufficiently varied to give a sensation of novelty. Pieces like "Mazeppa" and "The Siege of Corinth," were equally opposed to the moral traditions of English literature; in the first there is a suggestion of justified crime, and in the second the sympathies of the reader are with the man who has denied his faith and his country. As for "Beppo" and "Don Juan," they owed their success chiefly to their scandal, a new expression of immorality, a new mockery of social conventions, and, in the case of the second poem, a satire upon all the foibles of civilised society. Everybody was shocked, but everybody was pleased. Byron had all the sympathy that he possibly could have wished for. He became the great hero of his age, his portrait was hung up in thousands and thousands of rooms all over Europe, his verses were translated into all languages. He was the dream of beautiful women, and the admiration of imaginative young men. Even his dress was imitated by thousands of people. A Byronic fashion came into existence. Barbers dressed the hair of their customers so as to make them look as much as possible like Byron. To stand like Byron, to sit like Byron, and to sneer like Byron were considered accomplishments. High society and the church might say what they pleased of the man; they could even banish him from his native country. But the public made him its darling, its idol, its object of passionate worship.

This is strange, because the whole of the work that created this frenzy is in every way immoral, according to the con-

ventions respected by the same public that admired it. It is either cynical, or erotic (in the bad sense), or rebellious against everything most esteemed by the English people—law, order, religion. How are we to explain the matter?

We can best do so by a few illustrations. Really there are two distinct moralities believed in by the whole civilised world, however much the fact may be denied. One is a religious morality, framed in words and taught by precepts. The other is something very different. Take for example two cases of theft. A man whom you once respected goes into your room during your absence and steals the sum of one dollar. This is found out; and if the thief escapes prison, he does not escape public opinion. Nobody, knowing what he has done, will ever trust him or employ him. He will be outlawed by good society. But now take the case of a man able to steal five hundred millions of dollars. Men who can do thieving on a very great scale are never obliged to part with the money; they are able to keep what they steal, because they are stronger than the law. Now according to pure morality, religious morality, the second thief is five hundred million times more guilty than the man who stole one dollar. But will you say, candidly, that you despise the man who steals five hundred million dollars? No; you can not despise him, however much you try. Will society despise him? No, it will not: it will worship him; it will give him every honour; he will marry his daughters to princes, and he will marry his sons into noble families. But, morally speaking, is he not five hundred million times worse than a common thief who is put into prison at hard labour? Yes, but there is something more to be said.

There is another kind of moral law than the moral law which is taught us either by our fathers or by our religious teachers. It is not in accordance with human ideas of right and wrong. It is the iron law of the universe, older than all religions, and stronger. Whatever you believe, you have to obey that law. I call it a moral law, because it is moral

to this degree, that is requires self-sacrifice of a particular kind. Perhaps we might call it the law of nature. Nineteenth century philosophy calls it the law of evolution. But whatever we call it, it means simply this: "Make yourself strong, or I shall kill you." Religion tells us, "Try to be good, to be honest, to be loving and kind to everybody; then you can trust to the gods, and you will be happy after death. If you are not clever and strong, never mind; goodness is strength enough, virtue is cleverness enough. Do your duty as well as you know how, and that is all that is necessary."

But the law of the universe tells us a very different story. It says: "I have nothing to do with goodness or virtue. These are only other names for weakness and cowardice. The only important thing is to be strong. My law is the law of battle; the prizes are to the strongest—strongest in mind, strongest in body. An oyster, a worm is good. But such creatures exist only as food for my strong ones. You must either do my will, or vanish from the face of the earth." Now, as a matter of fact, life is battle. War is not a moral thing. We all know that war is necessary, that war must sometimes bring glory and honour and fame; but nobody can dare to call war a moral thing. According to no system of human morals can we consider it right to destroy the bodies of our fellow-men, to cover the ground with the scattering of their blood and brains. Nevertheless there must sometimes be war. This is a fair example of the contradiction between the religious moral law and the cosmic law. The first makes goodness the all important thing in this world, the second makes power the all important thing, and both have to be obeyed.

Nor is this all. In the present imperfect state of human society the universe-law has to be obeyed even more than the other, though we all feel that this is not right. Mere goodness will not enable us to secure the best things in life. One may be good, and yet very stupid; one may be very vir-

tuous, and yet very weak. It is necessary for success to be clever rather than good, and strong rather than virtuous. If one could be both, of course that would be much better; but, as I say, human nature is still imperfect, and the chances of the man who is both good and strong are not so great as the chances of the man that is simply strong, and not good. The latter is less restrained by scruples. Nearly all business, commerce in the western sense, is conducted according to knowledge of the latter fact. Business morality can be only relative. A man who should try to carry on any large business in Europe according to purely moral principles, would become bankrupt in a very short space of time.

Now you will see my meaning better in regard to the man who could obtain five hundred million dollars by any means, no matter how dishonourable. The world will respect him because of what he represents according to the law of the universe, not according to what he represents according to the law of religion. The man capable of performing such a feat, considering the conditions of the modern financial world, would have to be almost superhuman; the brain of such a man would have to be a structure superior to the brain of a Napoleon. He would represent, first and foremost, the most prodigious mental power in the world, and power can not be despised. He would represent also the money power that he had acquired by means of the intellectual power; and that could not be despised. It may seem shocking to say so, but the fact is indisputable that any human being able to prove himself superior to the moral, the social, and the civil law will be honoured, and greatly honoured, in any European country, because of what he represents in the battle of life. Some years ago there was a serious talk of marrying an English prince of the blood to the daughter of an American known to have made something more than one hundred millions of dollars by dishonourable means. This was not only because of the worship of money in itself; it was also because of the recognition that a man capable of

doing such things must be of uncommon intellect. Great thefts can be managed only by great means, not by vulgar means. On the other hand, who steals one dollar, or less, is justly despised, because his action shows weakness of the lowest kind.

Well, after this digression, let us return to the subject of Byron's influence. If Byron was able to influence all Europe, as he really did, it was not by telling, but by suggesting, the truth which I have just been trying to illustrate. He did this quite unconsciously. He was not a philosopher; he was not even a logical thinker. But he forced people to think in a new way. He made them ask themselves whether it was really enough to be simply good in this world, and whether what we have been accustomed to call evil and wicked might not have not only a reason for being, but a certain infernal beauty of its own. He infused the whole of European literature for a time with something which, for want of a better name, was called the Satanic spirit; and this Satanic spirit really signified a vague recognition of another law than the law of pure morality—the law of struggle, the law of battle, and the splendour of strength even in a bad or cruel cause. Remember that Byron never intended to do this; that he was not clever enough to have intended it. But he did it in spite of himself, and this explains his momentary power over literature. His own admiration of desperate and evil characters made people see in such characters what Byron himself could not see—that they were in themselves indications of a life-law from whose influence no one can be entirely free. Later on, greater minds than Byron's showed the same truths in a larger and healthier way. Then Byron was forgotten.

CHAPTER X

CULLING FROM BYRON

You know that the word "culling" means a gathering—that is to say, something that has been plucked or gathered. The word is especially used of flowers; therefore it has come to take also the signification of selections which represent the flowers of literature.

A few of Byron's beauties will form the subject of this lecture. He is not much read to-day, except in certain passages of "Childe Harold" prepared for use as school texts. But Byron can not be fairly represented by any single composition. His variety is too great for that. There is very much fault to be found with him, chiefly because he did a great deal of rather careless work. But he also did so many things in so fine a way that every student of English literature ought to know more about him than what the ordinary school texts represent. He was successful during his day as a narrative poet, as a descriptive poet, as a lyric poet, as a dramatist and as a satirist. All of these successes could not be guessed from the reading of any single composition. But if they could be, then it would be at "Don Juan" that we should look rather than at "Childe Harold,"—for in this unfinished poem Byron shows at least three different kinds of capacity—satire, lyrical tenderness, and descriptive splendour.

But, as I said, no one poem can give a full knowledge of Byron at his best; and we need not trouble ourselves to consider him at his worst or even at his mediocre moments.

I think, however, that a few selections here and there may give you some new ideas about Byron's value. The subject is opportune, for at this very moment there is going on in England something of a Byronic revival.

The greatest of modern German thinkers, the author of "Faust," and a passionate admirer of the English poet, said that Byron could not think—that Byron was a great dramatist, a grand poet, but not a thinker at all. No doubt there is some ground for this criticism. It is not to Byron that we should go for philosophy, for any suggestion of great metaphysical ideas. Nevertheless I should say that Byron can express large thoughts (whether his own or somebody else's does not matter at all), in a large and lasting way. I leave you to judge of this yourselves, in the following extract from the famous poem of "Don Juan." The subject is "Human Life."

> Between two worlds Life hovers like a star,
> 'Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge.
> How little do we know that which we are!
> How less what we may be! The eternal surge
> Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
> Our bubbles; as the old burst, new emerge,
> Lashed from the foam of ages; while the graves
> Of empires heave but like some passing waves.

I do not say that the thoughts here are Byron's; they are thousands of years older than Byron—they are thoughts known to the Far East from very ancient time. But Byron's way of expressing them is entirely his own, and it would be foolish to deny that the expression of them is sublime, and will linger always in the mind of the reader. First, life is compared to a something hovering between the infinite world of the past and the infinite world of the future, in the thin moment of the present. Even so a star appears to hang sometimes on the horizon, between the two immensities of sky and sea. Next the poet utters the universal confession of man's ignorance as to his own nature, and as to the future. The utterance is not particularly striking—indeed, it is almost commonplace, and it might be criticised even as to form (for nothing that Byron ever wrote is absolutely perfect in execution). But after these

plain lines, how splendid appears the great comparison of existence to a sea!—the great sea of life, whose foam bubbles represent the momentary lives of men, and the great waves the passing away of empires and of kingdoms. The suggestion is indeed one that reminds us how little we are in the eternal vastness of things. Only bubbles; and our bursting signifies nothing at all—there will be millions of new bubbles after we have gone. I think you will remember, in the English translation of Omar Khayyám, another comparison of human lives to bubbles; the original was probably inspired by some text of the ancient Indian philosophy. Now here Byron compares very well indeed with the finer poet; and, in point of sublimity, he is grander—he gives us a larger sensation.

There are few flashes in Byron like this; but this is sheet-lightning. Perhaps the word may be a little unfamiliar. In the season of thunderstorms, on a clear night, we sometimes see, far in the horizon, great, broad, bright, flashes of lightning. There is no thunder, no sound; and these great noiseless flashes are called in England sheet-lightning, because the appearance is like that of a vast white sheet suddenly opened and shaken. Well, as I say, Byron seldom has such fine thoughts as this verse contains, but the stanza will suffice to show you that he can be great at moments.

As a descriptive writer also, Byron can not be treated with contempt by the student of literature. When he wished to describe, Byron could describe quite as well as Sir Walter Scott, or even as Wordsworth, though his verses are less finished than theirs. Even as to finish, however, Byron must be spoken of with some respect. In two forms of verse he has shown extraordinary power; and these two forms are the Spenserian stanza and the *ottava rima*, neither of which is at all easy to master. The whole of "Childe Harold" is in the Spenserian stanza—eight iambic pentameters followed by a ninth line of six feet instead of five. The whole of "Don Juan" is in the *ottava rima*—eight iambic penta-

meters, alternately rhyming, except the last two, which rhyme together. Now let us see how finely Byron can describe in these measures, even with very plain words. Here is a little description of the Lake of Geneva at night. You must imagine a very great still stretch of water, surrounded by immensely high mountains.

> It is the hush of night, and all between
> Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,
> Mellowed and mingling, yet distinctly seen,
> Save darkened Jura, whose capt heights appear
> Precipitously steep; and drawing near,
> There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
> Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
> Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
> Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more.

You might hear and see and feel all this in Japan quite as well as in Switzerland—the description is of sensations and sights that may be enjoyed in thousands of places among mountains or by water, in any part of the world. But how true it is, how clearly it reminds us of experiences that we have had on summer nights, in the open air, under the stars, far away from city dust and city noise! The great stillness, the dark pure air, the sound of water dripping from oars as boats pass by, the vast dim shapes of mountains in the distance looking larger than they really are through the darkness, and the tinkling and calling of night insects—have you not all heard and seen and felt these things?

Nor does the poet forget something else that we all remember, though we very seldom write about it—that sweet sharp smell of plants and grasses which is most agreeable in the hours of dew. You do not enjoy this smell of nature in the day as you enjoy it during the night, especially in woods or by flowing water. At night the air is so still and so pure and so moist that the perfume appears to us much stronger.

Or let us take one stanza describing the hour of sunset, with a rising moon already in the sky. There are not very

many English poets who have dwelt with pleasure upon the beautiful appearance of the sky in those hours when sun and moon happen to be together in the sky, or, as Tennyson says, when we can sit down—"Between the sun and moon, upon the plain." If only for this reason Byron's verses are worth learning.

> The moon is up, and yet it is not night—
> Sunset divides the sky with her; a sea
> Of glory streams along the Alpine height
> Of blue Friuli's mountains; Heaven is free
> From clouds, but of all colours seems to be,—
> Melted to one vast Iris of the west,—
> Where the day joins the past eternity;
> While, on the other hand, meek Dian's crest
> Floats through the azure air—an island of the blest!

High blue peaks in a line rising into a sky of yellow fire, as in some of Hiroshige's coloured prints; that is the view on one side, and on the other, where the sky and sea touch, the young moon appears like a fairy island of light at the end of the world. So much for the mere picture; now let us observe the extreme beauty of the use of words in the sixth and seventh lines. Let us first take the word "Iris." You know that Iris is the Greek name of the goddess of the rainbow; and you know that it also means a rainbow. There are no clouds, the poet tells us, yet there are rainbow colours in the sky. In any beautiful and cloudless sunset this fact may be observed, though it is more easily observed in the tropics than in colder countries. The colour of the sunset near the horizon is at first blinding yellow; then this yellow becomes orange, or vermilion. Immediately above the vermilion you can find yellows and pinks and greens of the most delicate tints just like the beautiful faint colours that we see inside a great sea shell. These are the colours that the poet refers to in his use of the name Iris. But there is yet another beautiful suggestion in the use of the word—because "iris" also means the coloured part of the eye. So we have

the comparison of the whole beautiful heaven to a great eye of many colours, with the sun itself for a pupil.

The other line, the seventh, has not less of philosophical or meditative than of artistic beauty. There, he tells us, behold in the west another day passing into the eternity of all past time. That is one of the grandest lines in Byron.

As for the comparison of the sky to a great eye, hundreds of poets have made comparisons of a somewhat similar kind. Even when English poets or French poets speak of a "tender sky" or of "tender blue," there is a feminine suggestion. Tender signifies at once gentle and soft and loving; and a certain quality of soft colour in the human eye is intimated by the use of these soft adjectives. You will see that it is natural for such comparisons to appear in the poetry of grey-eyed and blue-eyed races—indeed you can find such comparisons suggested even in old Arabian poetry; for not all Arabs were black-eyed. But comparisons of the sky to a dark eye, a black, sparkling, flashing eye, are not common at all in English poetry. Here, however, is a daring example from Byron. He is describing a storm in the Swiss mountains above the lake; and he likens the effect to the black flashing of a woman's eye in a moment of anger or passion.

> The sky is changed!—and such a change! O night,
> And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
> Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
> Of a dark eye in woman! Far along
> From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
> Leaps the live thunder!

The comparison, however, is less remarkable than the splendid lines immediately succeeding it. They are often quoted by men of letters even to-day, although Byron in general is now little quoted. One more bit of sunset description—this time from "Don Juan." It would be the most beautiful of all Byron's stanzas but for a slight defect of construction. But in spite of any defect, it is very fine.

It is about the time when Don Juan and the young Greek girl that had saved his life suddenly feel drawn to each other, and kiss.

> They looked up to the sky, whose floating glow
> Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright;
> They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
> Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight;
> They heard the waves crash, and the wind so low,
> And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
> Into each other.

It is the repetition of "each other" that spoils the perfection of the stanza. Tennyson would never have been guilty of such careless writing. But Tennyson could not have improved on the splendid use of simple adjectives—every one like a flash of differently coloured light. How beautiful is the word "glittering" here, as describing the dancing of the light upon the rippling sea—for glittering is a word that moves—not a stationary word like "shine." And the simple adjective "broad" has only been used with equal power by one other English poet of that age; and that one poet happened to be Coleridge. But Coleridge applied it to the face of the setting sun. Byron first applied it with grand effect to the rising moon.

Descriptions of ghosts are not so common in western poetry that Byron's power in this direction can be easily forgotten. There is, in "The Siege of Corinth," a little description of this kind which deserves quoting. You will observe that the chief merit in the description, made with very simple words, is the part referring to expression, the change in the face of the dead:

> He gazed, he saw: he knew the face
> Of beauty, and the form of grace;
> It was Francesca by his side,
> The maid who might have been his bride!
> The rose was yet upon her cheek,
> But mellowed with a tenderer streak:

Where was the play of her soft lips fled?
Gone was the smile that enlivened their red.
The ocean's calm within their view,
Beside her eye had less of blue.
But like that cold wave it stood still,
And its glance, though clear, was chill.
Around her form a thin robe twining,
Nought concealed her bosom shining;
Through the parting of her hair,
Floating darkly downward there,
Her rounded arm showed white and bare:
And ere yet she made reply,
Once she raised her hand on high;
It was so wan, and transparent of hue,
You might have seen the moon shine through.

The scene is on a battle field at night, and the captain of the host, which is to attack the city at daybreak, is startled by seeing a girl enter his tent. He asks her who she is, and she remains silent. Then looking more closely at her, he is astonished to find that she is the maiden to whom he had made a promise of marriage. He does not know that the real woman is dead—that it is only her spirit that now glides before him. Even the reader does not discover the woman to be a ghost until he comes to the line about the moonlight shining through her hand as she lifts it. But the description has been preparing him for something strange. The silence, the soundlessness of the approach, the pallid sadness of face and the long loose hair, and the single robe, suggesting a shroud,—these make a weird effect quite naturally leading up to the sudden discovery that the person is only a ghost. However, in the story, the hero does not yet know what we know; he thinks that he is speaking to his betrothed, for he hears her voice; and it is not until she touches him that he knows.

Upon his hand she laid her own—
Light was the touch, but it thrilled to the bone,
And shot a chillness to his heart,
Which fixed him beyond the power to start.

Though slight was that grasp so mortal cold,
He could not loose him from its hold;
But never did clasp of one so dear
Strike on the pulse with such feeling of fear,
As those thin fingers, long and white,
Froze through his blood by their touch that night.

And when she had warned him that he must die in the morning, she disappeared. She does not fade or gradually vanish; she simply ceases to be. He looks about; there is nothing there. But he now feels sure that he will perish in to-morrow's battle.

One of the most celebrated shorter poems of Byron is the dream entitled "Darkness." I imagine that this poem may not be well known to you; and as all our previous quotations have been from the long poems, it were well to offer you at least one first class example of the shorter work. This poem presents us with the strange fancy of the sudden extinction of the sun. What would man do if the sun were suddenly to go out? The poem is very curious and very terrible, but you will recognise that it could not have been written in our own time. To-day we know very well what would happen if the sun were to burn out—the result would be, of course, a cold so tremendous that no life could exist whatever. But this weird thing was written nearly ninety years ago, and we can easily excuse the probability, or impossibility, because it is only a dream.

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chilled into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,

The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons.

So the poem begins; and it is an impressive beginning. Perhaps the word darkling in the third line may be new to some of you; it is the participle of the verb "to darkle," and conveys the idea of movement in darkness better than any other word in the English language. Notice also the fine alliteration in the fifth line of the words "blind and blackening"—blackening having the same meaning of motion in darkness as the participle darkling in the third line. The idea that men would burn their houses and palaces under such circumstances, in order to get light, must remind you how young our science of electric lighting and even of gas light, happens to be. But we are reading a poem written in the year 1816. To-day no such fancy would come to us in a dream; and our cities remain at night as luminous as we could wish, even when there is no moon. However, the fancy would have been natural enough in Byron's time. He goes on to tell us how whole cities were burned merely for the sake of light, and how the forests were set on fire for the same purpose. Perhaps it will seem strange to some of you that at the time when I was a little boy coal oil had not yet come into general use in lighting, and whale-oil was used in lamps. It would indeed have been difficult in Byron's day to think of any means of large illumination except common fire—fire of wood especially. Next we have a fancy about the effect upon the animal world of this sudden darkness:

The wild birds shrieked,
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawled
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food.

This is, though imagination, imagination well supported by facts. In certain countries, where great volcanic erup-

tions take place, things of this kind have actually been witnessed. Practically there is no sun or moon during the eruption, for the sky is darkened by ashes and smoke, and all is pitch-black. For example, in the great eruption of Java, a few years ago, there was just such a scene of horror for the time being as Byron pictures; and the birds stopped flying—came down to the ground and fluttered there in fear, while serpents and wild beasts seemed to have become perfectly tame. But such terrible conditions soon pass away. What would be the effect if the darkness always continued? Byron imagines that it would be like this:

> War, which for a moment was no more,
> Did glut himself again;—a meal was bought
> With blood, and each sat sullenly apart
> Gorging himself in gloom; no love was left;
> All earth was but one thought—and that was death
> Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
> Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
> Died and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
> The meagre by the meagre were devoured,
> Even dogs assailed their masters, all save one,
> And he was faithful to a corse.

Of course absence of light and warmth would mean the death of all vegetation—no harvests and famine. Famine might, very probably would, lead to cannibalism. But the ugliest part of the dream is the following episode, describing how, after the whole population of a great city had perished, excepting two men, these two men met and died.

> But two
> Of an enormous city did survive,
> And they were enemies; they met beside
> The dying embers of an altar-place
> Where had been heaped a mass of holy things
> For an unholy usage; they raked up,
> And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands,
> The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
> Blew for a little life, and made a flame

Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspect—saw, and shrieked, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written fiend.

I suppose you perceive the suggestion—each of those starving men had become so ugly, so horrible in appearance, by reason of long suffering that he looked like a demon or goblin; and each died of fright at simply beholding the other. They did not recognise each other at all,—they only screamed and died. In all English poetry there is nothing of more horrible strength than this poem of Byron's, and it marks a new departure. The eighteenth century classical school did not allow the obtrusion of very horrible details in descriptive verse of any sort; indeed, it objected to any strong display of emotion. But the romantic school returned to older traditions, arguing that the proper function of poetry was to stir the emotions, and that the emotion of fear was one to which literary art had a perfect right to appeal. Afterwards the French romantic school took the same ground; and Victor Hugo did exactly as Byron did in his "Darkness," often making the horrible for its own sake an artistic motive. I have shown you how Byron can be thoughtful and tender, and artistic in description, and horrible when he wishes to be; I shall now make a few remarks about his power of vivid narrative—that is to say, his power of telling a story in verse, so that his personages and his scenery appear to be real and alive.

There are two of the narrative poems that I would particularly recommend you to read. One is "The Siege of Corinth," the story of the brave Greek governor of the city, who, when the Turks captured the place, blew up the magazine with his own hand—killing himself, of course, but also killing thousands of the enemy. That is founded upon historical fact, and affords a fine example of Byron's narra-

tive quality. But the same quality is, perhaps, even better shown in his "Mazeppa."

"Mazeppa" is not so much read as it deserves to be. It is also founded upon fact—a fact in the history of Poland. There was a young page in the court of the King Jan Casimir, called Mazeppa. He was a very handsome boy, and some of the ladies of the court appear to have liked him too much. At all events the husband of a certain countess thought that he had good reason to be jealous of Mazeppa, and he did a cruel thing under that conviction. He had the boy stripped naked and tied to the back of a wild horse. Then the horse was set free—the expectation being that the lad would be torn to pieces. But fate willed otherwise. The horse had come from the Cossack province of Ukraine, and as soon as he found himself free, he made straight for his own country. He galloped for days, galloped right into the field from which he had been taken, and there dropped dead with Mazeppa still on his back. Some Cossacks found the lad in this condition, cut the ropes that still bound him to the dead horse, nursed him back to health and strength, and—finding that he was a brave lad, and a good rider,—adopted him into their nation. He married the daughter of a Cossack of rank, rapidly rose from grade to grade, at last became a hetman, and is historically famous for having assisted Charles XII. I do not tell you, as Byron will tell you presently, how he revenged himself upon the count who gave him that cruel ride. The facts of the poem are historically true; only the emotional part is Byron's own imagination, and it is imagined well.

The first part of the poem begins at the gate of the count's castle, as the horse darts away into the country, while the count's retainers roar with laughter at the cruel sight. Telling the story in his old age, Mazeppa says:

> There is not of that castle gate,
> Its drawbridge and portcullis' weight
> Stone, bar, moat, bridge, or barrier left;

Or of its fields a blade of grass,
Save what grows on a ridge of wall,
Where stood the hearth-stone of the hall;
And many a time ye there might pass,
Nor dream that e'er that fortress was.
I saw its turrets in a blaze,
Their crackling battlements all cleft,
And the hot lead pour down like rain
From off the scorched and blackened roof,
Whose thickness was not vengeance-proof.
They little thought that day of pain,
When launched as on the lightning's flash,
They bade me to destruction dash,
That one day I should come again,
With twice five thousand horse, to thank
The Count for his uncourteous ride.
They played me then a bitter prank,
When, with the wild horse for my guide,
They bound me to his foaming flank:
At length I played them one as frank—
For time at last sets all things even—
And if we do but watch the hour,
There never yet was human power
Which could evade, if unforgiven,
The patient search and vigil long
Of him who treasures up a wrong.

The horse in fear and rage rushes on, straight as an arrow, over the great plain, heading for the place of his birth. The boy struggles in vain to loosen his hands; they have been too well tied. Then he tries the effect of his voice—uses all those caressing words and tones which horsemen know, and which usually can quiet a trained horse even in the moment of fear. But this was no trained horse—on the contrary, a wild stallion, that had never had a man on his back before; and the sound of the voice only frightens him more, makes him rush on faster. At last, the plain is passed, and the horse rushes into a forest. Mazeppa hoped that here the stallion might tire and rest, for it was already growing dark. But no, the horse will never stop until he

dies; and a new danger comes, the horrible danger of wolves.

> The boughs gave way and did not tear
> My limbs; and I found strength to bear
> My wounds, already scarred with cold;
> My bonds forbade to loose my hold.
> We rustled through the leaves like wind,
> Left shrubs, and trees, and wolves behind;
> By night I heard them on the track,
> Their troop came hard upon our back,
> With their long gallop, which can tire
> The hounds' deep hate, and hunter's fire.

The last two phrases are famous—so much is expressed of the hardihood of the animal in those few words. Wolves can tire out the strongest dogs sent in pursuit of them, and they can also tire out almost any horse that they follow. But this horse they do not overtake, though the pursuit lasts all night. The animal reaches a great river at last, swims across, and gallops off, still in a straight line, to the great levels of the Ukraine. He reaches them, knows his home, gives a long loud whinny, as if to call for help and sympathy. And at that cry, thousands of wild horses rise from the grass, and rush to meet him. But as they come near, they smell the man on his back, turn about, and gallop away in panic. The poor stallion vainly tries to gallop after them; he falls dead with Mazeppa lying insensible upon his back. When Mazeppa opens his eyes again, he is lying in a bed, under a roof. And after the rush and sound of the verse describing that terrible ride, how very soft and charming comes the description of the little Cossack house, of the Cossack girl watching at his bedside:

> I woke—where was I?—do I see
> A human face look down at me?
> And doth a roof above me close?
> Do these limbs on a couch repose?
> Is this a chamber where I lie?
> And is it mortal yon bright eye,

That watches me with gentle glance?
I closed my own again once more,
As doubtful that the former trance
Could not as yet be o'er.
A slender girl, long-haired, and tall,
Sat watching by the cottage wall;
The sparkle of her eye I caught,
Even with my first return of thought;
For ever and anon she threw
A prying, pitying glance on me
With her black eyes so wild and free:
I gazed, and gazed, until I knew
No vision it could be,—
But that I lived, and was released
From adding to the vulture's feast:
And when the Cossack maid beheld
My heavy eyes at length unsealed,
She smiled—and I essayed to speak,
But failed—and she approached, and made
With lip and finger signs that said
I must not strive as yet to break
The silence, till my strength should be
Enough to leave my accents free;
And then her hand on mine she laid,
And smoothed the pillow for my head,
And stole along on tiptoe tread,
And partly oped the door, and spake
In whispers—ne'er was voice so sweet!
Even music followed her light feet.

It is impossible to deny the name of real poetry to such a composition as this, with its amazingly sudden changes from passion to passion, and from violence to tenderness. After that first lurid outburst of the spirit of vengeance, we have the story of the death-race presented to us in verses that actually ring like the feet of a horse; then what a hush, what softness and sweetness in the scene of the sick room, and the portrait of the girl-nurse! There is no better example of Byron's narrative power than "Mazeppa." If you will take the trouble to read it for yourselves, I am sure you will quickly see one fact, that it could be translated

into Japanese without losing much of its interest. And that is a great proof of power. But, in conclusion, let me remind you again, that Byron is never a careful poet—he always wrote straight out of his heart, without taking the trouble to polish his verses. Any critic can find bad work in Byron; but scarcely any poet can show us, at certain splendid moments, the same strength and the same fire of emotional life.

CHAPTER XI

SHELLEY

The second figure of the Satanic School is even more interesting than Byron. He was also still more of a rebel and an enemy of society than was Byron. But he had much higher talents. I mean Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The life of Shelley is one of the saddest and the most eccentric in the whole history of English literature. To characterise him as a man is useless, unless we first state the outlines of his extraordinary history. If we were to judge him only by what he did, we should be obliged to think of him as a brute, a ruffian, a creature without any sense of honour or decency or affection. But this would be wrong. Shelley was at once a very lovable man and a very great fool.

Nevertheless the peculiar folly of Shelley was a folly, in part, of the age, or perhaps we should be more correct in saying, of the age preceding, which projected itself into the nineteenth century. It consisted in putting into practice the absurd belief that civilised men should live according to nature. This, you know, was the mischievous teaching of Rousseau. We had something to say about the law of nature in speaking of Byron's work. Then I said to you that we are all obliged to obey the law of nature, or to take the terrible consequences. But this is only one side of an enormous question; and the life of Shelley is going to teach us something about the other side. While it is true that we must to some degree obey the law of the universe, it is also true that all human progress has been effected only through fighting against the law of the universe. Nature says, "Kill your enemy." But if murder were allowed in human society, society could not exist. The law against murder is in opposition to nature. Again nature says, "Indulge your

lust." But if no check were placed upon lust, there could be no family and no society. Nature again says, "Take from the weak all that you are strong enough to take from them." If there were no laws forbidding theft, there could be no property, and no civilisation of any kind. The Naturalists of the eighteenth century never thought of things in this way—not because they were essentially stupid, but because they did not know anything about nature. We know something about nature to-day; we know it is very cruel, and not in the least degree estimable from the standpoint of pure morals. Presently we shall observe what was the result when Shelley tried to live by it.

Now let us talk about the man himself. Shelley was born in 1792, of a good family, and his descendants to-day are people of high rank in England. He was one of those children who, to use a popular expression, "take after" their mother altogether. Shelley's mother was a remarkably beautiful woman, and the boy inherited her peculiar beauty. He grew up very slender, graceful, and girlish in appearance; nobody could see him without being charmed, not only by his face, but by his very graceful motion. He was sent to school at Eton, where his troubles began. In an English school the life is rough, very rough, and a sensitive boy is likely to suffer a great deal before he learns how to submit himself to this strange order of existence. At an English school it is no advantage for a boy to look like a girl; he is rather despised for being pretty—that being taken for a sign of weakness and cowardice, and he is quickly forced to fight in order to show whether he has any courage or not. Shelley had to fight a good deal, and got severely beaten at short intervals. But he had a very strong will, and a pride that pushed him through. He refused to obey the custom according to which the students of the younger classes must act as servants to the students of upper classes—what is called "fagging." To refuse to be a fag at Eton means that a boy must have extraordinary courage. Shelley's

courage made him friends—strong boys who took his part; and he was able to pass through Eton without fagging. But they tormented him a great deal, and made him hate the place, and not only the place, but the Christian religion that was taught in it, the morals that were inculcated in it, the advice of the teachers who allowed fagging to exist. Before leaving Eton, Shelley had become practically an enemy of religion and society. He did not see the larger fact of public-school life, that it is a preparation for the struggle with the world. He only saw the injustice and the cruelty, and he hated everything that they represented. All this injustice and cruelty were done in the name of Christian training, moral training, and social training. Therefore Shelley learned to hate Christian teaching and moral teaching and social teaching. You can imagine the effect upon Shelley of reading Rousseau and the French Revolutionary writers—also the effect of reading Voltaire and Diderot, very good writers for mature minds, but very dangerous for a boy whose mind was in such a condition.

Shelley thought it his duty to denounce as well as to hate Christianity. When a young man first discovers, through a higher education, that certain doctrines or dogmas of a religion are unbelievable, he has really discovered a fact of very little importance to anybody except himself. The dogmas and the doctrines of a religion may be as absurd as possible, but that does not mean at all that the religion is absurd. A religion means much more than a theory of the supernatural. It means the whole moral experience of a race. It means one of the forces that keep society together. It means the common principles of right and wrong as understood and practised by millions and millions of ancestors for thousands and thousands of years. Therefore even for those who can not believe its doctrines, it is, or ought to be, a very respectable fact. But Shelley was much too young to understand this, and to understand why it was

dangerous for him to attack Christianity in an institution founded by Christianity for the teaching of Christian truth as well as of Christian dogma.

While he was at Eton, he did not write anything except some foolish stories and poems, but he had scarcely gone to Oxford when he began. He wrote a pamphlet entitled "The Necessity of Atheism," and printed it, and sent a copy to all the heads of the Oxford colleges, and to all the authorities of the university, most of whom, you know, are clergymen. He refused when questioned to give any answers, or any reason for his foolish act. There was nothing to be done except to expel him, as he had not only broken the rules of the university, but had personally insulted every dignitary of the institution. So he was expelled in 1811; and he left Oxford, protesting against the injustice, and resolved to live according to the law of nature. We shall now see whither the law of nature led him, and into what extraordinary company.

He soon found other reasons for disliking all conventions. He had been for some time in love with a beautiful girl, his own cousin, called Harriet Grove. It had been intended by the parents of both parties that Harriet should marry Shelley; but Shelley's conduct brought about a change in this decision. He had not only got himself expelled from the university, and had openly professed to be an atheist; but he had declared that he hoped to make one of his own sisters "a divine little scion of infidelity." If he could make an atheist of his sister, it would certainly have resulted in greatly injuring the young lady's future, not because of the comparative merit of belief or disbelief in itself, but simply because men do not want to marry women who profess athesim. So if Shelley was thus anxious to injure his own sister, how could he be trusted to be a good husband for Harriet Grove? She was given in marriage to another man; and Shelley, after that, hated Christi-

anity more than he had ever hated it before; he would not suffer it to be mentioned in his presence.

Now we can see this beautiful, talented, generous, but very wilful boy wanting to fight the whole world, because he believed the world was all wrong. He was in an unfortunate position. It is true that he had money and social rank, but he was exactly like an innocent child in his knowledge of the world that he was opposing; he had the passions of a man without any experience, and he was astonishingly beautiful. It is dangerous, this gift of beauty. It was especially dangerous in Shelley's case. He could charm almost any woman, and there were plenty anxious to be charmed by a young gentleman of eighteen, who had no more wisdom or malice than an infant. The first mistake that a lad in Shelley's position is likely to make is in regard to women. There was nothing bad in Shelley's heart; he would not deliberately and knowingly have done a great wrong. But he could do wrong by impulse even when believing himself to do right. He ran away with another Harriet—Harriet Westbrook, a school girl of sixteen, and married her in Scotland. If a sensible man had done this in a sensible way, it might have been all right. But why did Shelley do it? Not because he loved the girl, but because he pitied her. This is very foolish, to marry a woman out of pity without knowing anything about her character. He expected to be sorry for it for himself later on, because he actually told her that when they became unhappy together they could separate. English law does not permit this kind of separation, but Shelley detested all law, and said that he would only submit to marriage as a protection for his wife.

This was his first mistake; but it was not a very bad one. The bad ones were to come later on. Shelley next wanted company and sympathy, and he could not expect these among his own class. Society was not inclined to tolerate

either his doctrine or his conduct. He looked about him for acquaintances who would; and he found one in the person of William Godwin. Godwin was one of the remarkable figures of the time—an infidel, like Shelley, a philosopher, a disbeliever in law, and a disbeliever in marriage. He had been a clergyman, and then had become an atheist. He was an excellent man of letters. He had written some novels which are still, even to-day, worth reading; and an extraordinary book entitled "An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice," in which he tried to prove that law was unnecessary and tyrannical, and that marriage ought to be done away with. It was a clever book, and Shelley was delighted with it. He said that it had changed the whole order of his mind.

It is impossible to speak of Godwin without speaking of Godwin's family, who were destined to play an important part in Shelley's life. There was a woman of good family called Mary Wollstonecraft, who has a name in English literature. She was a noble-hearted person, but the world treated her badly, and she learned to hate it in the same irrational way that Shelley did. Mary had a large family to support; and she supported them by teaching and writing. She also wrote a book against marriage, and against many other things. It was called "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." Then she went to Paris, in the time of the Revolution, and unfortunately made the acquaintance of an American scamp who lived with her for two years, had a child by her, and then deserted her. Thus she was made to understand, in the most painful way possible, that marriage meant something in this world. She wished to kill herself, but Godwin happened to meet her. He was a good-hearted man, in spite of his theories, and he saved her by making her his wife. Thus these two people, both of whom had written books against marriage, disproved their own theory by marrying. Mary died, leaving Godwin a daughter, also called Mary. Her child by the Ameri-

can, called Fanny, was adopted by Godwin, who married again. His second wife also had a daughter by a former husband—a grown up girl, known in literary history as Miss Clairmont. Miss Clairmont was seduced by Lord Byron, and had a child by him.

This was the household in which Shelley made his first friend. A nice household! Godwin; Miss Fanny, an illegitimate child; Miss Clairmont, Byron's mistress; and Mary Godwin, a beautiful girl of sixteeen. All of these believed what Shelley believed, and offered all possible sympathy. He was not shocked at the stories that he heard about them; they were enemies of society like himself, and he loved them for it. Unfortunately he learned to love one of them a great deal too much—Mary Godwin. Mary was really a wonderfully clever girl; she has left a name in English literature that will last for all time, because she wrote the story "Frankenstein." There was but one wrong thing that we can accuse Mary of doing during her life; and that was allowing Shelley to make love to her when he already had a wife and two children. But we must remember that Mary was then very young, only sixteen; that she was a strong believer in the doctrines of her father against marriage; and that she was naturally a person of great force of character and farsightedness. Perhaps she said to herself, "If I do not take him away from the woman, somebody else will; therefore it is better that I should do it, because I can tame him." What did Shelley do? He went to his wife, and told her that he could not love her any more, and that he was going to leave her forever. She was pregnant at the time! Now this shows the astonishing ignorance of Shelley. He could not have done this knowing what he was doing. He was like a child that is cruel without knowing it. He knew nothing about women—we may add that he knew nothing of human physiology. Even a naturally cruel and wicked man would not do such a thing to a pregnant woman—because he

would be afraid of the consequences. Shelley was not afraid of the consequences, because he knew nothing about them.

After this unconscious but atrocious cruelty, Shelley secretly ran away with Mary Godwin to Switzerland, thus betraying his friends, as well as outraging his wife. Godwin had preached against marriage; this was his punishment. Mary Godwin held the opinions of her father; she was quite willing to become Shelley's mistress in spite of the fact that he had left a young wife behind him. Of course Godwin was very angry. He called Shelley a traitor, a scoundrel, and various other names; and Shelley naturally replied that he had only followed Godwin's own teaching. Ultimately they were to become reconciled, but for the time being there was very bitter feeling between them. Mary did not care. She was only sixteen; but she was much the strongest character in the whole crowd. She knew exactly what she was going to do, and she knew how to manage Shelley. If she could not make him absolutely afraid of her, she at least taught him a little self-control, and kept him from doing anything more that was obsolutely wicked or foolish. She helped him with his poetry, and made him work. Unfortunately she could not help the fact that he became the friend and companion of Lord Byron, a companion who was not good for him under the circumstances. Miss Clairmont had accompanied Shelley and Mary to Switzerland, because she wanted to see Lord Byron, the father of her child. But Byron had just managed to entice a beautiful Italian lady away from her husband, and he did not care to be burdened with Miss Clairmont. She had to become a teacher in Venice. This, and other incidents of Byron's brutality, helped Mary; for she was working bravely to keep Shelley out of mischief, and she was not sorry to find that Byron's conduct had disgusted him. The pair were quite happy for a time abroad; but now the consequences of Shelley's follies were to show them-

selves at home. Harriet Shelley, deserted by her husband, went to the lake in Hyde Park, London, and drowned herself. Then for the first time Shelley began to understand what he had been doing.

He understood still better when he returned to England with Mary, whom he was now able to marry, and did marry at once. No person would speak to him. Old friends walked by him without noticing him. More than Byron, more than any other man of the time, Shelley was suddenly detested by society. He could not live in England. He was regarded as an enemy of everything good and a preacher of everything bad. Shelley himself did not mistake the attitude of society; he called it contempt, and contempt it was, withering contempt. Society thought of him and of Mary as of two animals—nothing more.

Western society is a very curious thing. It forgives some crimes, and never forgives others. Let me try to explain. Western society often forgives a man for running away with another man's wife, provided that the man had no wife or children of his own. But it never forgives the woman in such a case. You may have read in the papers some years ago that the son of a famous statesman ran away with another man's wife, and was afterwards forgiven for it. Now it must seem, from the standpoint of pure morals, that this is very unjust. The purely moral wrong is just as great on the man's side as it is upon the woman's. But the aristocratic code of morals seems to regard the man in such a case as an avenger of society—seems to consider that a woman who can not be faithful to her husband deserves to become the prey of any one clever enough to trick her. And after all, society is not entirely unjust to the woman; it says to her, "If you do wrong as a wife I shall never forgive you; but I shall protect your rights as a wife by never forgiving the man that openly breaks the marriage bond." That is the one unpardonable sin of the man which is never forgiven; and Shelley had been guilty of it. He had de-

serted his wife, deserted his children, betrayed his friends, and run away with another woman. Byron was bad; but Byron had never done anything so bad as that. It would have been utterly impossible for Shelley to live in England. So he went to Italy and never returned.

He did not have long to stay in Italy. In the summer of 1821, he and a friend went out in a boat—their own boat, which they had called *Don Juan*, in honour of Byron's poem. A sudden storm overtook the young men at sea, and the boat went down. A few days after, both bodies were washed up by the sea, and were burned on the shore by the friends who recognised them. Byron helped at the cremation, and almost went mad with grief. So ended this poor passionate life, full of blunders and full of brilliancies. You will see that Shelley scarcely lived to be a man. He was little more than a boy at the time of his death, and his genius was quite immature.

If I have taken rather long to tell the story of Shelley, I think I am quite justified by the confession of Shelley's greatest admirer to-day, Professor Dowden, who says that it is impossible to understand a great deal of Shelley's poetry without understanding the facts of his life. This is not true of the shorter pieces, but it is certainly the case in regard to the longer poems. There remains now to explain the change of public feeling toward Shelley after his death. Over his tombstone were placed two Latin words signifying "Heart of Hearts"; and the English world now thinks that this epitaph is just. Yet you know now, yourselves, what cruel and foolish things Shelley did. Why is he excused to-day? Well, simply because the evidence collected in regard to his life and character proves that he was really what his epitaph calls him. He was foolish in his generosity, just as he was foolish in other things, but nobly foolish. He made little or no use of money for himself, but gave away what he had, right and left, whenever he saw suffering or pain. He never deliberately—that is,

knowingly, acted unkindly to those about him. His whole soul was supremely generous. But his mind had been unbalanced by false doctrines regarding society, and often in doing what he believed to be right, he stumbled into doing what was sadly wrong. Even in his cruelty to Harriet, it is tolerably certain that he did not know he was cruel, did not know that he was unjust. There is a Japanese proverb to the effect that the gods do not punish those who do not know. And to-day the English world forgives the wrong that Shelley did, though it could not have forgiven him while he lived; it thinks of him as a foolish handsome boy, more to be pitied than blamed, and it is even proud of him because, although only a boy, he bequeathed to literature the finest lyrical work, in some respects, of the nineteenth century. There has been only one other lyrical poet to compare with Shelley—that is Swinburne. Swinburne is the direct follower, the only direct follower, of Shelley that we have.

Shelley's direct influence was slight, except in the case of Swinburne. But that is because of the supreme difficulty of imitating him. Shelley has less solid matter in him than any other English poet who has reached the first rank. When I say solid matter, I refer especially to thought, which is the solid matter of literature, whether it takes the form of emotional expression or descriptive narration. Shelley is almost what he called his own skylark, "an unbodied spirit." There is no body; there is nothing warm and firm to touch; there is only a voice, and even what that voice is saying we can not always understand. But it is very sweet,—very sweet indeed; and as we listen, even without understanding it, the voice touches the heart, and makes the fine thrill which only great poets make. It is not possible to define the methods of this ghostliest of singers; we must be content to feel them. What he did for English poetry was to create a new emotional utterance, not to be imitated; and to show lyrical possibilities that had

never been dreamed of before his time, not even by Coleridge.

Yet there is very little of Shelley that is truly great. His first long poem, "Queen Mab," with its famous attack on Christianity, is very light and vague and unsatisfactory. His "Revolt of Islam" is much superior; but we can not say of it, "no other poet could have written this." We feel that other poets might have done even better. And besides the comparative weakness of the longer poems, there is a drawback that the text has in many cases never been properly finished. Shelley's poems are full of gaps—lines with words left out, beginnings that have no ending, and endings that have no beginning. I should not advise you to waste any time with the longer poems; they do not show Shelley at his best. It is different when we come to drama. There are two grand dramas—"Prometheus Unbound," based upon Greek studies, and the marvellous and horrible drama of "The Cenci." The story of Beatrice Cenci, you know, is a story of incest and murder, a frightful episode of Italian history. Here Shelley is very great; this is the greatest tragedy written by an Englishman since the days of Webster and Ford, but it is not actable—no English audience of to-day would endure it. I advise you to read it, however, because it is the only one of Shelley's large efforts in which we have a display of force. The Greek tragedy, or drama, is ethereal, supersensuous, utterly extramundane—and by so much below the Greek idea of what a drama should be. For music and beauty of words, it is indeed very wonderful, but it has a number of shortcomings, and only part of it represents Shelley's highest. In spite of the dramas, we must confess that Shelley's greatness is to be sought for—especially by the student—in his lyrical poems.

CHAPTER XII

SOME NOTES ON THE POETRY OF SHELLEY

A RECENT lecture, you will remember, was about Wordsworth, the least impassioned of all the great poets of the nineteenth century. I have thought that Shelley may very fitly be considered in a short lecture, because he offers such an extraordinary contrast to Wordsworth in everything. No man was more conventional in certain ways than Wordsworth; no man was less conventional and more passionate than Shelley. Even as a youth, Wordsworth acted and thought and wrote like an old man. Shelley was only a boy, and even if he had lived to be a hundred years old, never could he have lost the charm of his boyishness, though he would no doubt have outlived and overcome his faults. Here I am going to try to interest you in some of his exquisite poetry—poetry which, at its best, has never been equalled and probably never will be surpassed.

This poetry is not all of it equally good. Some of it was written when he was quite a boy, and had chiefly excited attention by calling himself an atheist, by attacking Christianity, and by getting himself expelled from Oxford University. In those days he was not wise enough to do really great things. The best of his poetry was written later, a few years before his death, and a great deal of it was not published until after his death. It was then edited by his young widow. Mary Shelley was one of the best editors who ever edited poetry; but she reverenced her husband's work too much even to think of trying to finish anything which he had left unfinished; and we have, therefore, in the complete edition of Shelley's works a large quantity of unfinished stanzas—quarter poems, half poems, half stanzas, quarter stanzas, broken lines, fragments of all de-

scriptions. Thus we have to choose selections from the more immature work or from the later unfinished work. Altogether the finished portion of Shelley's poetry is much smaller than might be imagined at a glance. In this he resembles another poet of the same period, Coleridge, who left a great deal of work half done. But in both cases, the fragments are precious in a supreme degree; and perhaps, if they were completed, we might be less pleased than we now are with them.

It is in the shorter poems that Shelley is most great, and if you can learn the beauty of only three or four of these, you can claim to know something of the very best poetry ever produced in England. I shall begin with a little piece which some critics have called the most perfect poem of the nineteenth century—not meaning English poetry only, but all poetry written during that time. I am not learned enough to attempt any confirmation of this judgment; to do so would require a very great knowledge of poetry in a great many languages. But the observation has been made even by so capable a scholar as Professor Saintsbury, and I repeat it merely as an interesting fact. The little poem has no title, but is remembered always by the first line. However, the editor has called it "A Lament." It contains only two stanzas:

O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
  Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
  No more—oh, nevermore!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
  Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
  No more—oh, nevermore!

What is this little bit of emotion? It is the regret of a young man for the joy of his boyhood. He compares his

path of life to a steep flight of steps or a ladder—so dangerous and difficult to climb that, at every succeeding step, the climber shudders and wonders at the peril of the step taken immediately before. I suppose that every young man, or nearly every young man, has regretted his boyhood, though not many young men have had such cause for wonder and fear as Shelley had. And in boyhood we do not know enough about the difficulties of life to feel afraid for the future. The thought of to-morrow never poisons the happiness of to-day. But after one has grown up and has become the head of a family, then anxiety and fear for the sake of others begins to darken every aspect of life. Nature seems to us still beautiful; but we can not now enjoy that beauty as we did, before the real struggle of life began. That is why the poet cries out "O, when will the beauty of the old happy time came back to me?" Of course it will never come back. Something, he says, something joyous, has gone out of the world, out of the night, out of the day, out of the beautiful seasons. Each season used to bring a particular sense of happiness to the boy. But to the man each season now brings only the remembrance of some great sorrow, some great pain,—the death of somebody loved, the memory of some unhappy thing. And these unhappy things never can be forgotten; therefore the seasons will never again bring to the beholder pleasure and joy.

This is the meaning of the poem; and you will recognise how true and how sadly beautiful that meaning is. But why should these two little stanzas have been called the most perfect poetry in the whole range of English lyrical verse? Because the composition is, in the first place, emotionally perfect; and because in the second place it is musically perfect. The first merit you can easily judge of yourselves; so much has been so well expressed in those few words. But I am not sure that you would not find it difficult to appreciate the music of the thing. Really it requires a good ear to perceive the supreme value of Shelley.

I do not think I could possibly explain to you the beauty of the verse as melody, unless you can feel it without explanation. It consists of a peculiar, liquid, slow, soft melancholy, implied much more by the measure than by the mere words. The measure is not at all difficult to analyse. You will at once see the slight irregularity of the composition. But this irregularity is artistic in the highest degree; it is the same principle of irregularity which characterises the best forms of Japanese decorative art. And, furthermore, it not only avoids every tendency to monotony, but it greatly enhances the slow, sobbing melancholy of the measure. Yet what does all this analysing signify towards a proper valuation of the poem? Just exactly nothing at all. You can not explain the beauty of a verse by dividing it into iambics or trochees, and the poet in composing it never could have thought about measuring and varying its syllables; he only sang suddenly out of his heart like a bird.

The same quality of regret—regret for the joy of young days—will be found beautifully expressed in another poem which is simply entitled "Song." I shall quote the finer verses of the composition.

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
  Spirit of delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
  Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

How shall ever one like me
  Win thee back again?
With the joyous and the free
  Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

As a lizard with the shade
  Of a trembling leaf,

Thou with sorrow art dismayed;
  Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

. . . . . .

I love all that thou lovest,
  Spirit of delight!
The fresh earth in new leaves drest,
  And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

I love snow, and all the forms
  Of the radiant frost;
I love waves, and winds, and storms
  Everything almost
Which is nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

. . . . . .

I love love—though he has wings,
  And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
  Spirit, I love thee.
Thou art love and life! Oh, come,
Make once more my heart thy home.

You will find this quite as beautiful emotionally as the other poem,—though perhaps it is less perfect musically,—when you understand exactly what Shelley means by the "spirit of delight." This spirit is nothing else than what philosophers call the "simple joy of being," the pure delight in mere existence, which man shares with the animals. Every young thing has this kind of joy,—perhaps notably the little kitten. But young horses, calves, lambs, kids, and puppies exhibit the same delight on bright sunny days, when nature seems joyful. Then we notice all these young creatures jumping about, running hither and thither, chasing each other, playing together, apparently perfectly happy. But much more does the child, even the boy or

half-grown girl, show the same joy in the mere act of living. How often do we see a boy or a little girl laughing at the sky, the grass, the flowers, out of pure happiness, or running about and jumping merely for the pleasure of movement, the delight of free exercise! That is the spirit of delight—the true happiness of existence, perhaps the very greatest happiness possible in this world. The older we grow, the more we lose the capacity for such pleasure. Your student of eighteen or twenty does not skip about like a kid, or roll on the grass for mere fun, like a happy boy of ten or twelve years. He is becoming too serious for that. Nevertheless the young man can still feel something of the pure joy of life; he feels it in his larger sports, his athletic contests, his adventurous excursions. But as the years go by the pure happiness that a bright day brings, the delight of motion and vision, comes less and less often, and the whole capacity for happiness simultaneously diminishes by slow degrees. It is for the boyish joy that Shelley prays in this charming poem; he wants to feel again as he felt when he was very young and very innocent. So he addresses nature, telling her how much he loves her, asking her to share with him her own happiness, which is the joy of being. And he is not wrong in declaring that happiness means both love and life. Perfect health and freedom from care, and strong youth, really mean all that is good—the whole power of exercising our best faculties in the most generous way. But though we can sympathise with all such regret, we feel how utterly hopeless it is. You can not make the river of time flow backwards; you can not become young again—except, perhaps, by dying. And the poem leaves us with a soft impression of sadness. It is curious that the sadness of the song is not in the least affected by the measure used. The trochaic measure is especially adapted to joyful emotion, but Shelley has used it successfully in the expression of regret.

Now I shall take a little poem of an entirely different

kind to show you how exquisite Shelley can be in handling even subjects of a kind which poets do not usually find inspiring. What do you think of a poem about an owl? I believe there are plenty of Japanese verses about owls, but they are not of a tender or serious kind—at least such is my impression. Tennyson and Coleridge as well as Shakespeare have written poems about owls, but these are usually of a dismal or weird kind. That an owl could inspire feelings of love, or pity, or tenderness, may seem strange to most of us, but Shelley found such inspiration from the hoot of the bird. However, there is a little owl in Southern Europe of which the cry is rather sad than disagreeable,—indeed, it is almost plaintive. The title of this little poem is "The Aziola."

"Do you not hear the Aziola cry?
Methinks she must be nigh,"
Said Mary, as we sat
In dusk, ere stars were lit, or candles brought;
And I, who thought
This Aziola was some tedious woman,
Asked, "Who is Aziola?" How elate
I felt to know that it was nothing human,
No mockery of myself to fear or hate!
And Mary saw my soul,
And laughed, and said, "Disquiet yourself not,
'Tis nothing but a little downy owl."

Sad Aziola! many an eventide
Thy music I had heard
By wood and stream, meadow and mountain-side,
And field and marshes wide,—
Such as nor voice, nor lute, nor wind, nor bird
The soul ever stirred;
Unlike and far sweeter than them all.
Sad Aziola! from that moment I
Loved thee and thy sad cry.

This little poem takes a personal interest from what we know of the life of Shelley, besides charming us by its deli-

cate music and suggestiveness. Mary is, of course, Mary Shelley. The husband and wife are sitting together in Italy, some beautiful summer evening, when the cry of the bird is heard. The name Aziola is a feminine name, and Shelley, who has reason to dislike the visits of any but personal friends, imagines that it is the name of a woman, "a tedious woman," as he says, meaning some strange visitor. He is quite pleased to find that it is only an owl, a very small owl, hooting in the garden. This owl has rather a sweet note, unlike its kindred, and it is the melancholy in the note that particularly interests the poet. He had often heard it before, but never knew what bird produced that strange note.

After such a poem about an owl, one need not be surprised to hear that the finest poem about a bird, in the English language, with one possible exception, is by Shelley. There are two very famous English poems about birds,—I say two because the hundreds of other English poems on the same subject do not even faintly approach the perfection of these. One is the poem of Keats upon the nightingale; the other is Shelley's ode to a skylark. The whole of this would take a considerable time to cite in class; I shall select the more beautiful stanzas. To make a comparison between this poem and the poem of Keats is almost impossible, so nearly equal is the merit of both. However, one thing may be noticed. The poem of Keats is singularly sad; its emotion is pleasure-pain, and pleasure-pain in which the painful element dominates the pleasurable one. But in Shelley the emotion is all joyful; it is an ecstasy, gladsome as the song of the lark itself. And the difference in the two compositions very properly harmonises with the difference in the birds' songs described. The music of the nightingale is as melancholy as it is sweet, but the chant of the skylark is only joyful—there is not one sad note in it.

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

. . . . . .

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As when Night is bare
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

. . . . . .

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine;
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal
Or triumphant chant,
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt,—
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields or waves or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? What ignorance of pain?

. . . . . .

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not;

Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate and pride and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then,—as I am listening now.

I have left out eleven stanzas of exquisite description and exquisite music, so that we can take the philosophical kernel of the poem by itself. The thought of the poet is simply that the happiness of the bird, which can not think in the same way that a man thinks, is shown by its song to be superior to any happiness that man can feel. But this simple happiness of the bird is not necessarily superior in itself. It may be due to the fact that the memory of such little creatures as birds and insects is too short or too special to allow of their thinking about the troubles of life. Most of our human sorrows are either of memory or of prevision; and fear of the future can only exist in minds that keep the memory of the past. We are troubled by the prospective only in proportion as we see the retrospective. Except for this fact we might say that Shelley's statement about the happiness of the little bird is really true. And he thinks to himself, "If a man could only feel the same delight in living that the bird feels—if a man could only have the

same freedom from pain, what happiness it would be! Yet even then human happiness could not produce the very same kind of joy." And he proceeds to praise the song again, as sweeter than all human melody. If a poet could only sing like that, his power would be something beyond estimate. "If I could sing like that," says Shelley, "the whole world would stop its work and thought, just to listen to me, as I now listen to that lark." Of course Shelley does not mean that he wishes to sing with a bird's voice. He means only that if a man could make a poem as full of joy and sweetness, then that man would be a greater poet than any other who ever lived in this world. And we feel that this is true.

A great deal of the old poetry about animals and birds has been spoiled for us by modern science. Even some of the poetry of Wordsworth suffers from the expansion of modern knowledge. During the centuries preceding the nineteenth and even in the beginning of the nineteenth, it was almost a fashion to write about "the happy birds," the "joyous butterflies," the "merry flies." At the time of the nature-movement in France,—the movement partly made by Rousseau, when nature was falsely represented as loving and pure and ineffably good—it was the custom to write about the happiness of animals. But we now know a great deal too much about nature to write in this way. The philosophy of evolution is partly responsible; because it first taught us the meaning of the struggle for life. We now comprehend that nature is very cruel, that animals and birds, in the wild state, live in almost perpetual fear, and that insect life contains tragedies more horrible than ever old poets dreamed of in their imaginations of Hell. But we know also enough about the psychology of animals to perceive that they can not suffer mentally as we do in certain directions. There was published a few years ago a little sketch in French about a cow, which impressed me as being illustrative of the difference between the modern

and the old-fashioned way of thinking. A French man-of-war is on its way from Tongking to Europe, and there are many soldiers and sailors to be fed, so the ship carries many cows. Every day one or two cows are killed; and at last there are only two cows left. When one of these is killed in the presence of the other, the living cow becomes horribly frightened, and moans, and struggles, so that everybody is sorry for it. Then a sailor goes up to the moaning cow and gently rubs its nose and speaks kindly to it. Thereupon the cow licks his hand, forgets its fear, forgets the killing and the blood and everything, and begins to eat quite happily again. That one little act of kindness was enough to obliterate the memory of the killing and the fear of death. That was a good and touching little study of animal psychology. You can see that the old talk of the poets about the joys of nature and the happiness of animals seems utter nonsense, in comparison with such observation as that. So, as I said before, much poetry on the subject of birds suffers a great deal to-day because of scientific progress, and because of the habit of exact thinking. But such poetry about birds as the poetry of Shelley and Keats does not suffer by comparison with the results of exact knowledge. The highest poetry is always true. And the truth in these two cases is not a truth about a bird—it is the truth of the emotion which the poet feels at hearing the birds sing, and which he has expressed so purely and so strongly that his verse will never die.

So, again, in the treatment of inanimate objects the old poets wrote much that science to-day laughs at. It is only the greatest poetry in which the poet's ignorance of science does not injure the beauty of his thought, or mar the force of his description. We know so much now about the atmosphere, about the rocks and the trees, about the moon and the stars, that we want our poets to remember facts when they write verses on such topics. To the old English mind, as to the Greek mind, the moon might appear

divine, but to-day we have maps of the moon; we know that it is a dead world, and we can not think of it as divine at all. Formerly everything might be personified, infused with spirit by the poet; but to-day he has to be very careful. Nevertheless Shelley's personifications have such intrinsic value that they charm us still quite as much as they charmed people half a century ago. For example, that wonderful stanza of "The Cloud"—

> That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,
> Whom mortals call the moon,
> Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
> By the midnight breezes strewn;
> And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
> Which only the angels hear,
> May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
> The stars peep behind her and peer;
> And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
> Like a swarm of golden bees,
> When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
> Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
> Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high
> Are each paved with the moon and these.

It is not merely the wonderful music of the double rhymes and the beauty of the images that pleases here; there is also truth of a kind which every observer of nature can feel and praise. Of course it is the spirit of the cloud that is supposed to speak; and we do not believe in such spirits. Neither can we believe in the beautiful Lady Moon worshipped by the old Greeks; and the stars do not really appear to move in the way here described. But all that makes no difference. How beautiful is the suggestion of the slender goddess walking over the heavenly floor of white clouds, as over fleeces of silver and gold laid down to welcome her. Nothing could be better than the comparison of the appearance of the highest clouds to light fleeces; indeed, popular fancy long ago used the same comparison, and large white clouds are still called by English

peasants and sailors "wool-packs." The words used throughout the stanza are as imponderable and delicate as vapour or moonshine itself. And the man who wrote this must have been a good deal upon mountains. The description is of clouds as seen from above, not from below. Did you ever look down from a mountain top upon lakes and rivers far away, and at such an angle of vision that the water caught the sky-colour? If you have, you will remember how much those spaces of still blue water looked like pieces of sky, as the poet calls them,—pieces of sky fallen down through holes in the clouds and reflecting the lights of heaven. Shelley may have seen them at night, from the top of some Italian mountain; then, reflecting the moon and stars, they might well have suggested to him this idea of a pavement celestial, studded with figures of the moon and the stars.

One more stanza from the same poem; it is still the cloud that speaks:

> I am the daughter of earth and water,
> And the nursling of the sky;
> I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
> I change, but I can not die.
> For after the rain, when with never a stain
> The pavilion of heaven is bare,
> And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
> Build up the blue dome of air,
> I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
> And out of the caverns of rain,
> Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from a tomb,
> I arise and unbuild it again.

Here even the scientific facts are sufficiently correct to bear criticism, although a meteorologist might laugh at the line about the "caverns of rain"; for "caverns" suggests something below, something hidden away underground, and we know that the great source of rain is above—the heat that updraws the vapour. Still there is no reason why a poet should not mingle fancy with science at times, and we

do not care whether the caverns of the rain exist or not —the imagery is beautiful. Notice the exquisite use of simple words, "blue dome of air," for example, in relation to the use of such surprising expressions as "convex gleams." No poet has ever more beautifully imaged the sky, and that which the sky images in fancy. The word "convex," you know, means the opposite of hollow. It is here used optically; why does the poet so use it? Undoubtedly because of its scientific connotation. We speak of lenses as concave which have this form (and of those as convex which have this form). Almost everybody knows these words through their relation to telescopes, spectacles, eye-glasses of some sort. Thus we think of "convex" or "concave" in relation to glass and transparency. The value of the word in this stanza is in this very suggestion of transparency, the sky being represented as a vast transparent blue dome, or the appearance of a dome, formed by optical effects of air and light. But the principal charm of this poem lies in the way that it repeats to us the ghostly impression which cloud forms make upon anybody watching them. If you will take the trouble any windy day to watch the clouds for even half an hour, you will easily persuade yourselves that nothing is so ghostly as the coming and the changing and the vanishing of a cloud. It comes into the sky apparently from nowhere like a ghost; then it rises and takes a form entirely different from the form at first seen; it shifts its shape in a hundred ways, too quickly and too multiformly even to be correctly drawn. Try to draw a moving cloud some day, just for fun. Before you have drawn one side of it, both sides have changed shape. It is only by instantaneous photography that you can correctly fix the apparition of a cloud. And after haunting the sky for a little space, again it passes away to nowhere. In summer, very high white clouds may actually be seen to melt away into the blue air. Probably most of the world's poetry about ghosts, and the vanishing of them, has

been suggested by watching the motion of clouds. Now Shelley's poem produces in the reader the ghostly feeling which the watching of clouds can suggest to any imaginative mind; and it does this in a way that no other English cloud-poem has ever done.

Accordingly when one reads any of the shorter poems of Shelley upon inanimate objects, one can never entirely forget them. They are personifications of so powerful though so ghostly a kind, that they haunt the memory like some impression of living faces. A week or two ago as I was returning home, a very cold strong wind began to blow, and I looked to see from what direction it was blowing,—as from that I could guess what kind of weather we should have upon the following day. The wind was blowing directly from the west; and immediately there came to my memory the opening words of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," though I had not read the poem for many years. It is a splendid example of the qualities about which I have been telling you. There is only one other poem addressed to wind in the English language that can be at all compared with this, and that is Kingsley's "Ode to the North-East Wind." But there is a tremendous difference in execution; and in point of fancy the poem of Kingsley can not at all compare with Shelley's, though equal to it in strength of another kind. Let us take a few stanzas of Shelley's famous poem.

> O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
> Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
> Are drawn, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
> Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
> Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
> Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed
> The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
> Each like a corpse within its grave, until
> Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow
> Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
> (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)

With living hues and odours plain and hill:
Wild spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

This is in spirit Greek. The Greeks, you know, personified the winds, giving them names, and praying to them as gods, and building temples to them. At one time there were eight winds worshipped as divine beings, and one famous temple of the winds is still standing. Like the Greek poets, Shelley is about to pray to the wind; and first in the old Greek manner he repeats all its attributes and powers, speaking at the same time of the south wind of spring as an "azure sister," a very beautiful expression, reminding us of bright warm days when all things are bathed in blue light. And we think also perhaps of the famous old Hebrew phrase, "When the earth is still by reason of the South Wind." But what is the poet about to ask of the cold and angry wind of the west? This:

If I were a dead leaf, thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable!

. . . . . .

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are fallen like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an inextinguished hearth,
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

The first half of the above quotation is only the expression of a wish—the wish that the poet could be borne away

from the troubles of life by the wind, like a dead leaf, like a cloud, or like the waves of the sea which run before the wind's urging, and so are free!—only less free than the wind itself. The second part is the direct prayer, a prayer to the wind for inspiration. "Let me be your harp, O wind!" the poet says—"even as the forest is a harp for you!" From very old times in poetry the forest has been called "the harp of the wind," and anybody who has listened to the sound of the wind in a pine-forest will be able to appreciate the power of the comparison. The rest is more fanciful, but very beautiful too, in its way. "Give me your strength, O wind!—or, since you can not give me that strength, take my place, act for me, like a soul! Scatter my burning thoughts over the world, even as you scatter the autumn leaves, or sparks from a dying fire! I am but a weak man—Oh! would that I had your mighty power!"

CHAPTER XIII

KEATS

JOHN KEATS, unlike Shelley and Byron, was not of gentle birth. He was the son of a livery-stable keeper—that is, a man who keeps horses and carriages for hire, not considered a very respectable occupation in those days. But the livery-stable keeper was well to do, and tried to give his son a decent education. Keats, who was born in 1795, was sent to an ordinary school, and received an ordinary course of instruction until the age of fifteen, when he was apprenticed to a surgeon. His position corresponded pretty much to that of the Japanese graduate of an ordinary middle school who might become a doctor's assistant, through inability to bear the expenses of the higher medical course. A very clever boy may succeed at such an apprenticeship provided that he has strong nerves, great patience, and great capacity for work. Keats had not these things. He was slender and weak; the sight of blood made him sick; and under any circumstances he never could have made a good doctor, much less a surgeon. He soon gave up the attempt and took to literature. You must remember that he did not have a very good training—no Greek or Latin to speak of, and only a limited amount of reading. But he had what made up for these,—a passionate love of truth and beauty, and an exquisite ear for the music of words. And therefore, even without the higher education, he was able to influence English literature more than any other poet of his time.

Keats began to write poetry quite early, and published his first book when he was yet almost a boy, in 1817. He had a little money, just enough to live on, and was thus saved from much of the cruel suffering which is apt to visit those who attempt a literary career without independent means.

Still, he had no opportunities like those of Byron or Shelley, nor enough money to buy many books. He lived in a little room in the great city, dreaming the dreams which translations of the old Greek authors inspired him with—inhaling the smoke of London into his delicate consumptive lungs, but full of hope and enthusiasm. These hopes and this enthusiasm were brutally suppressed for a time by the violent, ignorant and mean attacks upon his work made in the great reviews. They not only said that his book "Endymion" was bad as poetry, they not only ridiculed the writer in his work, but they attacked him personally, after a fashion which would not be tolerated to-day. They had found out that Keats had been a doctor's apprentice, and they abused his vocation—told him that no man in his position had any right to attempt poetry—told him to go back to the doctor's office, and try to make himself useful there. All this, remember, to a delicate sensitive boy, who had never done any harm to any one, and who could scarcely, in the generosity of his nature, understand the meaning of unkindness. But it is not true that the criticism caused his death—that is a literary fable. It hurt him very much, no doubt, but he was brave and sensible, and went to work again. Nothing could show the beauty of his character better than the fact that he blamed himself instead of blaming his malicious and cowardly reviewers. He said that his work *was* bad, but that he would try to do better. Observe that there was no one to give him sympathy. His poetry was altogether a new thing, a strange thing that nobody had even seen the like of before, and that nobody for that very reason could immediately understand. Byron could not understand it. Wordsworth and Coleridge remained indifferent to it—indeed, Wordsworth contemptuously spoke of it as "pretty paganism," showing how much of English cant really existed in Wordsworth's soul. Shelley was not at once able to persuade himself that Keats was really a poet. The only friends that Keats had in literature were men like Leigh

Hunt, who had very little real poetry in their composition. In spite of everything, Keats did not lose confidence in himself. Consumption attacked him, but he toiled on. Then his first great sorrow, greater than the sorrow of the cruel reviews, came upon him—an unhappy love affair with a girl remembered in literature as Fanny Brawne. He fell passionately in love with her at the most passionate age, and she seems to have at one time thought of marrying him. But she was a sensible woman; she saw that the boy was dying, and very probably she did not like the prospect of being left a widow within a year or two after her marriage. Perhaps we had better say that she was not a woman capable of very great love, the sort of love that delights in sacrifice. For that she can not be blamed. But she might have been kinder to her poor worshipper; she excited his jealousy in many needless ways, and kept him in a state of perpetual torture. Between his constant literary work and this devouring and overmastering passion, his life began to melt away like wax before a fire. In 1821 the doctors told him that he must go to Italy as soon as possible. Before embarking, he said, with a sudden flash of hope, "I think I shall be among the English poets after I am dead." In Italy he lived but a little while. Just before his death he would seem to have lost all of his hope again, probably through the weakness of disease, and he said that his name was "written in water." Now it is very strange that the boy whose career we have thus briefly glanced at should have been the literary father of Tennyson, of Browning, and, to some degree, of Rossetti. There are critics who declare more than this—that Keats is the father of all the best poetry of the century since the period of Byron and Shelley. I do not think that so sweeping a statement is to be accepted without further proof than has been given. But there is no doubt of this,—that the two greatest poets of the Victorian era owe him almost everything, and that all the Victorian poets of importance owe him something. What is very

sad is to know that he died without any idea of what he had accomplished.

Immediately after his death Shelley perceived what Keats was, and wrote the beautiful poem "Adonais" as an elegy upon Keats and a reproach to his reviewers. Byron, too, was sorry for his death. Gradually the public woke up to the fact that it had been deaf and blind and stupid, and Keats's poetry became a subject of new enthusiasm.

Keats is too important a poet to be fully considered in the course of this lecture; we must make his work the subject of a special study. But enough can be said now to show you the greatness of the place he occupies. He is not a poet easily appreciated; he is too exquisite for that. This was his misfortune. If he could have been immediately understood, his life might have been happier, if not longer. But even to-day, he does not appeal to the young. This is not because he is obscure, but because of the extraordinary finish and fulness of his lines, which demand constant effort of imagination and fancy to read correctly. You tire of reading many pages of Keats in quick succession, just as you tire quickly of eating very sweet cake. Young people like to read poetry for the story, and there is scarcely any story in the larger part of Keats's work. It ought to have been understood by men like Wordsworth and Shelley at once; but the probability is that, having heard that the author was a boy, they did not give his poetry serious attention at first. We ought not to blame them too much for this dulness, however, because to-day the rule is that Keats appeals only to mature judgment. Rossetti, for example, did not care for Keats when he was very young; later in life he placed Keats above all the other poets. Tennyson's first loves were Byron and Shelley, but Tennyson learned to write great poetry only after he had learned to rank Keats above Shelley. And the same extraordinary fact is true of Robert Browning.

So we must consider Keats as giving the greatest living impulse to nineteenth century poetry. But why? When

we look at his work, we do not find him inventing new measures. The rhymed lines of "Endymion" are very similar to those used by other poets; the structure of his sonnets and of his odes is not new; the blank verse of "Hyperion" is just like the blank verse of Wordsworth; and his only ballad, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci,"—one of the sweetest and weirdest things in English literature—is not different from the form of the ballad used by Coleridge and others. In short, Keats did not give us anything new in the way of form. The secret of his power must be sought elsewhere. It is in his quality. I have said that the blank verse of "Hyperion" is in form the same as the blank verse of Wordsworth, but when you study any part of the poem carefully you will find that everything in it reminds you of Tennyson, and that nothing in it reminds you of Wordsworth. Really the qualities of Tennyson with which you have become by this time somewhat familiar are the same that make the character of Keats's poetry—sonorousness of phrase, splendour of colour, and a sort of divine intuition in choice of words, as in the famous line—

Sat grey haired Saturn, quiet as a stone.

What Keats did was this—he studied and absorbed the best of everything that had been done by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, and Shelley before his time, everything belonging to the romantic movement; and by his natural genius he was able to fuse all this together into a totally new form of expression. He summarised and utilised all the forces of the moment, and so taught the generations after him how to do the same thing. He was especially the eclectic poet of his time. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Byron, Shelley, even Scott, had all been working on individual lines; Keats worked in all the best of those lines at once, with perhaps the exception of the religious line taken by Wordsworth. He had no sympathy with that. His feeling was that beauty itself was a kind of religion; and he

was one of the first to proclaim boldly the doctrine that beauty is truth. In this he had something of the old Greek feeling; and although he was no Greek scholar, not even an educated man, when he touched Greek subjects he managed to get closer to the feeling of Greek life, the sense and the charm of the beautiful old paganism, than any other poet before him. After his death somebody asked Shelley, who was a very fine Greek scholar, how it was that a man without education, like Keats, could have described Greek life so exquisitely; and Shelley instantly answered, "Because he *was* a Greek"—meaning, of course, that the soul, not the blood, of Keats was Greek.

Now the charm of the Greek poets, in spite of their immense intellectual superiority, was a charm of the most childlike kind, perhaps because the wiser a man grows the simpler he becomes in the best sense. You will find the same fact exhibited in the history of the evolution of any complicated piece of machinery—say, a sewing machine, a steam engine, a watch, or a rifle. The first forms of these were very complex indeed, but with every new improvement their structure becomes simpler and simpler, and the tendency now is ever in the direction of greater simplicity combined with higher power. Well, in the mind of the old Greeks, who saw great truths perfectly, the beauty of utterance consisted in expressing the largest truth in the most direct and frank way, and in language that a child could understand. Keats had this exquisite gift of "lucidity"—a word meaning clearness and distinctness, like that of an object seen in a strong light. There is never any vagueness about Keats, as there is about Wordsworth. Unfortunately his earlier work shows some defects that are not to be reconciled with Greek art-feeling at all,—over-elaboration, too much ornament, too many images. But even in this earlier work—I refer especially to "Endymion"—you will find one quality in Keats that is very distinct—straightforward boldness in the use of common words. Classic rules had indeed

been broken by Wordsworth and Coleridge, but this was chiefly when they wrote in the lighter forms of lyrical verse. Keats was not afraid to break classical rules even in solemn and serious verse, and critics were astonished to find colloquialisms mixed up with classical phrases. But presently it was recognised that these simple expressions were in perfect harmony with the graver terms which they accompanied, and that their use lent to the verse not only additional force, but also additional beauty, because, after all, beauty must be natural. I shall now only mention to you the names of those poems of Keats which I think that you ought to know;—as we are going to consider the texts at another time and place. I should not advise you to read "Endymion" nor "Hyperion"; these you would find very difficult and unsatisfactory to begin with. "Hyperion" is the best, but it remains a fragment. "Calidore" is also a fragment; had it been completed we might have something like Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel" or Coleridge's "Christabel." These you can very well skip for the present, because there is a great deal of Keats worth reading. Of the longer poems I should especially recommend "Lamia." This is the best modern poem upon the old Greek story of Philostratus,—though in prose the same idea has been taken up by a great French writer with even more splendid results. Lamia is a phantom woman, really a serpent or dragon. She takes the form of woman only to entice a young man to love her. Being detected by the philosopher and magician Apollonius on her wedding night, she vanishes, leaving the bridegroom dead of love and sorrow. It was a great stroke of art on Keats's part to make the reader sympathise with Lamia, rather than with the young man; and the French romantic writers have followed the same line of treatment. Then we have the poem "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil," founded upon a terrible story from Boccaccio. Keats's treatment of it is very delicate,—making appeal altogether to the pathetic sentiment, and judiciously

hiding the horror as far as possible. But the very daintiest of the longer poems is the wonderful "Eve of St. Agnes," —founded upon the pretty superstition that if a maiden fasts and prays on the evening before the feast of St. Agnes, she will be able to see her future husband in a vision during the night. The treatment here and the scenery are mediæval, much in the style of Coleridge's "Christabel," but we have none of the Gothic harshness or gloominess—all is love and tenderness and beauty. I need say nothing farther here about the longer poems; but you can already surmise that Keats worked upon a great variety of subjects. What is absolutely necessary for the literary student to know are a few of the shorter pieces, which remain matchless in their originality and exquisiteness.

Of these I should call the "Ode to a Nightingale" the very greatest—greater even than Shelley's wonderful poem on the skylark. Next we have the famous "Ode on a Grecian Urn," which has become one of the classics of nineteenth century literature. And the "Ode to Psyche" is not inferior in beauty or emotional power. Those three odes alone would represent sufficiently the greatness of Keats without mentioning any others.

Besides the odes there are a number of sonnets which you ought to know; for example, the beautiful poem on the Grasshopper and Cricket—one of the few examples in European literature of interest in a subject much loved by Japanese poets; then the sonnet beginning "To one who has been long in city pent"; the piece beginning "When I have fears that I may cease to be"; the splendid composition entitled "The Human Seasons"; the first of the two sonnets entitled "Fame"; the poems upon Autumn, upon Melancholy, upon Fancy; and the exquisite picture of adoring love beginning—

> Asleep! O sleep a little while, white pearl!

Besides these, and the much-quoted sonnet on Chapman's Homer, Keats has given us a cluster of light and dainty

lines,—half-song, half-poem, that have taken their place among the treasures of English verse, and that are too often quoted from to be ignored. Such are the verses on Robin Hood, and those on the Mermaid Tavern, which almost every Englishman knows by heart—the beautiful piece beginning "Bards of Passion and of Mirth." And lastly I think that everybody ought to know "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." Very probably this charming ballad was inspired by the unhappy love of its author; at all events it represents the pleasure-pain of unhappy passion as no other modern ballad has ever done. The theme, the phantom woman whose love is death, is almost as old as the world; thousands of poems have been produced upon it. But in simple weird beauty I do not know of anything in all English literature exactly like this.

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE LYRICAL BEAUTIES OF KEATS

We shall not have time to say much regarding the longer poems of Keats; we must confine ourselves to the shorter poems, which really are much more important to literature and to the student of literature. But you should at least know something about the plan of these poems which we can not consider in detail, so I shall make a few remarks about the subjects of "Endymion" and of "Hyperion." Endymion was, in Greek mythology, a beautiful youth of divine descent. Sleeping one night under the moon, on the top of Mount Latmos, he looked so beautiful that the moon came down out of the sky and kissed him. According to some poets, she kept him asleep by divine power for a long time. This story made strong appeal to the young and passionate fancy of Keats, and while yet a boy he began his poem on the subject. But he changed the Greek story a great deal. Endymion is not put to sleep by the moon, but is courted by her in various disguises. Sometimes she appears to him in dreams like a woman all made of light; and in his waking hours she appears to him sometimes as an Indian maiden, dark and beautiful. He finds himself accordingly in love with two beings at the same time, never suspecting that both are one and the same. At last, one day, while he is speaking to the Indian maiden, the transformation takes place; the dark woman suddenly becomes a being all made of silver light, and she takes her lover away with her. During these episodes Endymion has his sister Peona for a confidante; and various other personages of Greek mythology appear upon the scene. As to plot, the narrative is not very successful. It is prodigiously complicated, and quite as difficult to read as Spenser's "Faërie

Queene." Also the mythology is not the mythology of the scholar, nor is the description of Greek life such as a scholar would have made. Altogether the thing reads much like the fairy romances of the Middle Ages. The faults of the poem are likely to prevent it from ever becoming a text book for students; we can feel that it is only the work of a boy, and that many lines in it show immaturity. But it will always remain among the classics on account of the strange beauties which can be picked out here and there, and which give us a foretaste of the splendour of Tennyson's expression. It is perhaps unfortunate that in this poem Keats did not attempt blank verse. The rhyme which he thought fit to use must have been a great fetter upon him, and must have more than doubled, if not tripled, the difficulty of the work.

Hyperion is an old name for the solar divinity; but the subject of the poem is the dethronement of Saturn—by the Greeks called Chronos, the deification of Time, and the father of all the Gods. According to Greek mythology, there were two divine ages, the age of the old gods and the age of the new. Saturn was dethroned by his own children; then began the reign of the new gods. You have all heard about the old war between the giants, or Titans, and the gods. Keats, taking these myths, intended to fuse them together, and to make the battle between the giants and the gods an episode of an attempt to restore Saturn to his place of power. Disheartened by criticism, he never carried out his intention. Hyperion opens with a description of the sorrow of Saturn after his dethronement, and an attempt to console him on the part of the various divinities, fallen like himself. We are introduced into an assembly of the Titans and the older gods; then Hyperion appears upon the scene, and the poem suddenly stops. Thus in "Hyperion" there is nothing about Hyperion—or at least a very little. The fragment has been beautifully compared to the gateway of a great temple. We ascend the steps; we look at the

carpet; we admire the architecture; we imagine the splendour of the edifice beyond; and, entering the temple court, lo! there is nothing! Nevertheless this is a grand piece of blank verse, and I would recommend you to read this poem in preference to "Endymion." But the beauties of what has been called "the Greek tone" of Keats, will be found rather in the short pieces to which we shall now turn.

I should say that the most Greek of Keats's short poems is the "Ode to Psyche." If you do not know the story of Psyche, perhaps you will not see how very beautiful this poem is. Psyche is said to represent the human soul in Greek mythology, but you must not allow this fact to deceive you as to the very real nature of Psyche as a divinity in the Greek mind. She was a person, always represented as a slender pretty girl with the wings of a butterfly growing from her shoulders. She was one of a numerous family, and her sisters were jealous of her because she was prettier than they. Presently she began to receive visits at night from a divinity. This divinity was Cupid, or Eros, the god of love; but Psyche never saw him—she only felt his caresses and heard his words. He said she must never try to find out who he was, or to light a lamp in the room when he came, and that if she did either, he would never see her again. But her sisters jealously suggested that her lover was not a god, but a monster; and that she must try to see him. So one night she lighted a lamp and looked at her lover asleep, and saw the most beautiful of all the gods. But a drop of oil from the lamp fell upon his shoulder; he woke up, reproached her, and flew away. Then she wandered over all the world to find him, and was very unhappy; and the story of her wanderings and her sorrows has been deliciously told by the great Roman author Apuleius, who wrote the book called "The Golden Ass," which all of you ought to read some day, because it is still one of the world's great books. It was from this story that Keats got his inspiration for the "Ode to Psyche." Perhaps it is too long to

allow reading the whole of it now; but I shall quote the exquisite closing stanza as an example of the rest.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new-grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-clustered trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lulled to sleep;
And in the midst of this wild quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreathed trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in!

Now beautiful as this is in itself, the beauty is greatly enhanced by the philosophy of the old Greek myth, which the poet feels. The Greeks held that the story of Psyche and her lover was a story of the relation between the divine and the human,—the seeking of the human for the divine, and the ultimate union of both in a spiritual world. And we must fancy the poet here to be addressing not merely the Greek girl with the butterfly wings at her shoulders, but his own soul.

The faculty of instantly seizing the very centre and core of an emotional fact, and of setting it before the reader in one lightning-flash of dazzling verse, is equally visible in the famous "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Keats had seen such an urn, or more properly, as we should say, vase (the word urn being especially used for stone-vases); and the beautiful figures upon it touched him deeply by their grace and pathos. Here was the relic of a civilisation utterly van-

ished, a civilisation of exquisite beauty, joyous, simple, and nature-loving. Its cities have disappeared from the face of the earth; its gods exist only in museums; its people are nowhere;—but on this vase we see the thought and feeling of two thousand or three thousand years ago, just as fresh as if it had been painted only yesterday. The subject is a religious festival, a *matsuri*—exactly such as we have in this country at times; there is a thronging of happy people to the temple—children and old men and maidens, and youths, with a priest or two among the crowd. A musician plays upon a flute. A boy tries to kiss a girl; and she tries to run away from him. Everything is just as real as if we saw it; the humanity of three thousand years ago was not so very much unlike the humanity of to-day. And the boy-poet, looking at this relic, thinks in sorrow for a moment of the impermanency of this world. But, as suddenly, there comes to him a new sense of the immortality of art. Everything is gone but the art of that time; it preserves the memory of that festal day; it leaves the musician still blowing his flute, and the boy still trying to kiss that girl after three thousand years. Notice how beautifully Keats speaks of this ghostly music and that ghostly love—I am quoting only the second stanza:

> Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
> Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
> Pipe, to the spirit, ditties of no tone:
> Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
> Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
> Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
> Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
> She can not fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
> Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Shall we paraphrase this golden verse? Music heard by the ear, however sweet it may be, is never so sweet as music heard by the imagination only. Therefore how delightful

it is to fancy the melodies being played by those old Greek flutes thousands of years ago; grateful to the soul is this soundless music. O young man, standing under those trees, you have been standing there for many, many centuries; and you can never go away! But that does not make any difference to you; because the leaves of those trees never will fall. Young lover, for many, many centuries you have been vainly trying to kiss that little maiden; and your lips are very close to her lips; but they will never touch, never! Still, you must not be sorry; there is a recompense. She will always be young, always beautiful, through the thousands of years, and you will always love. Such love is like the loves of the immortals! Human beauty soon withers and passes, but never the beauty of the being that you will love upon that vase.

In simpler subjects we find the same grace, the same vividness, and I think you will appreciate this little poem upon insects, a theme with which I suppose you are very familiar in your own literature.

ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET

The poetry of earth is never dead:
  When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
  And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
  In summer luxury;—he has never done
  With his delights; for, when tired out with fun,
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
  On a lone winter evening, when the frost
  Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one, in drowsiness half-lost,
  The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

As the heat increases, the song of the English cricket always becomes louder. The suggestion of the poet is delicious truth; drowsing by the fire, the warmth enables the

body to forget winter, and the shrilling of the little insect near the fire brings back to the dreamer impressions of summer, the light of the sun, and the smell of the flowers. Here again we find an example of the poet's capacity to seize and express the central fact of an emotion.

This he sometimes accomplishes with a simple straightforward utterance of ecstasy. A charming example is from the posthumous pieces. It represents only the strong affection mingled with admiration which comes upon a lover watching the girl whom he loves asleep; and there are only seven lines. But more could not be said in seven lines.

> Asleep! O sleep a little while, white pearl!
> And let me kneel, and let me pray to thee,
> And let me call Heaven's blessing on thine eyes,
> And let me breathe into the happy air,
> That doth enfold and touch thee all about,
> Vows of my slavery, my giving up,
> My sudden adoration, my great love!

One of the most beautiful things about a boy's love, when healthy and true, is the sudden desire that it inspires to be unselfish, to sacrifice everything for the person loved, to welcome pain or trouble if by either some happiness can be given to the object of affection. And that is the central thing expressed in these pretty verses. There is also a charming touch of the shyness which characterises a boy's love—the almost religious timidity which he feels in the presence of the person inspiring it. I refer especially to the lines in which he envies the air of the chamber—"the happy air"—happy because it can touch her, as he dares not do. There is a very chaste beauty in all the expressions of passion by Keats,—because he had the heart of the child, true and noble. We have been accustomed in poetry to admire chiefly the expression of love in young girls, but as a matter of fact the phenomenon in a boy, just entering upon manhood, when he loves without exactly knowing why, is quite as beautiful and quite as sacred; and it is the boyish quality

in the love of Keats that gives so many of his poems their extraordinary sweetness and freshness. No mature man would pray to become a star for the reason that Keats so prayed; but how pretty it is! It is supposed to be the last poem he wrote, when the hand of death was on him.

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
  Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
  Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priest-like task
  Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
  Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
  Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel forever its soft fall and swell,
  Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

The comparisons in the sonnet are peculiarly beautiful; it is a specialty of Keats's poetry, this large, sublime and original imagery in speaking of nature. It qualified even his prose. There is a beautiful passage in one of his letters which I may cite by way of illustration: "In truth, the great Elements we know of, are no mean comforters: the open sky sits upon our senses like a sapphire crown; the air is our robe of state; the earth is our throne; and the sea a mighty minstrel playing before it." These similes were caught up afterwards by Swinburne, and worked into one of his poems about sun, wind and sea.

There is a darker side to Keats's love, however—the disappointment and the pain, together with the certainty of death. The gloom inspired by this sorrow found expression in the only ballad which he wrote, "La Belle Dame sans Merci." The title Keats probably got from some of the old romances of chivalry; there are many "fair ladies without pity" in the stories of the French mediæval writ-

ers. But the ghostly part of the fancy is probably northern. There were a great many strange northern beliefs about fairy women who loved men to death,—one of the oldest being rather a terrible superstition of the El-woman. She sat by the roadside in lonesome places; and when she saw a young man approaching, she smiled upon him and made herself beautiful to attract him. But if he kissed her, he at once became mad, and remained mad until he died. The El-woman was a woman only in front; her body behind was hollow, like an empty shell; but she took good care not to allow young men to see her back. Besides the El-woman, there were many other amorous phantoms believed in during the Middle Ages—vampires and demons, many of which we can trace back to Greek and Roman myths. The church never taught that the old gods did not exist: they did exist, she said, but they were evil spirits, constantly tempting men to love them in order to destroy those whom they could deceive. Taking these different beliefs together, Keats fused them all into one new poetical conception,—his Fairy Lady without Pity. Perhaps the ballad will seem to you very simple; emotionally, however, it is not simple at all, but one of the weirdest things we have in English verse. The style, of course, is that of the mediæval ballad.

O what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms,
  Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is withered from the lake,
  And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms,
  So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
  And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
  With anguish moist and fever-dew;
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
  Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful, a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

You should know one peculiarity of El-women was that they could not speak distinctly; they only made little mourning sounds. They might sing the air of a song, not the words.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long;
For side-long would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna-dew;
And sure in language strange she said,
"I love thee true!"

Notice the word "sure"—which proves doubt. The knight is trying to persuade himself that she really did speak to him those words. But she did not, she could not; she only made inarticulate sounds which he imagined to be words.

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sighed full sore;
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep
And there I dreamed, ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dreamed
On the cold hill's side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—"La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

I saw their starved lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing!

He can not go away, even after the warning; the enchantment is upon him, and we know that he will wander about there until he dies. In writing this poem certainly poor Keats must have thought himself in a like condition, hopelessly loving, with a love that was killing him, a being who could never be anything more to him than a kind of fairy lady without pity.

We may now turn to another miscellaneous class of poems, which we shall find to be nowise inferior to those that we have already read. For example, we must read the "Ode to a Nightingale," and a part of the beautiful verses upon Autumn—some descriptions which will, I think, remind you as much of autumn scenery in your own land as it reminds English readers of the English harvest time. Except for the mention of sheep, and the names of a few birds or plants that are not Japanese, we might imagine ourselves watching the same scenery in the neighbourhood of Tokyo. I think the last stanza of the "Ode to Autumn" will be the most impressive for you; the picture is not unlike a drawing by Hiroshige or Toyokuni.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music, too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river-swallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

The lines I have put in italics seem to be especially beautiful and truthful. It is especially in autumn that we see at sunset clouds making long bars or streaks in the west, right across the great yellow or red glow of sunset, and taking strange colours with the changing of the light. At such times even a stubble-field, so ugly in the full glare of day, looks beautiful because of the splendid light of colour which falls upon it. In Japan, as in England or America, autumn is also especially the time of water insects—mosquitoes, gnats, and dragon-flies; and it is also a time of singing insects that do not appear earlier in the year. Of course we have no sheep on the hills about us, and we do not hear the bleating of lambs; but we have the same gathering of swallows, and if we have not the redbreast, we have other autumn birds uttering the same kind of melancholy whistle. The expression "wailful choir" is especially suggestive, and the reference to the sallows of willow trees along the river bank shows observation; for you must have noticed that the clouds of little insects that haunt our autumn evenings are thickest in the shelter of trees.

Let us now take the "Ode to a Nightingale." It is a little long, but it is the finest thing of its kind in all English poetry, and the time we give to it will not be wasted. I shall dictate a paragraph on each stanza.

I

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
  My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
  One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
  But being too happy in thy happiness,—
  That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
    In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
  Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

The first effect of beautiful music is pleasure, perhaps mingled with surprise; but as the sound continues to affect the hearer, the pleasure may grow to the intensity of pain. The first stanza of this ode has for its subject such pleasure-pain. Nothing is more mysterious than the effect of certain music upon the senses, and I think that nineteenth century philosophy has alone succeeded in offering an explanation of this mystery. Spencer was the first to put the explanation into scientific form. He declares that no personal experience in this life could account for certain effects of music—that the pleasure can only be accounted for by the experience of millions of previous lives, experience in some sort transmitted to us by inheritance. The whole theory, which is most interesting and beautiful, can not be summarised in these few remarks; but I should advise you to read Spencer's essay on the subject, entitled "The Origin and Function of Music." Now it is this ecstasy of musical delight which the poet is trying to describe, as aroused in him by the song of a nightingale. "I feel," he says, "a heaviness in my heart as of grief; I feel a kind of sleepy weight upon me, as if I had drunk the juice of hemlock, or had swallowed a cup full of some narcotic even to the dregs, just a moment ago, and had begun to sink in death towards the river of Forgetfulness. And this feeling, I know, is not one caused by wishing to be as happy as that bird—no, it is quite the contrary; it is because the happiness makes me too happy, because I hear him singing about summer, like some Greek tree-spirit, in the musical space of beech-tree leaves and shadows, with all the power of his little voice, in absolute fearlessness of man."

2

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been
  Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
  Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,[1]
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

The next feeling of delight expressed by the poet may seem rather boyish; but it was in the style of the time, and very correctly classical. The Greeks and Romans considered joy incomplete without wine, without drinking just enough to put one into a pleasant glow by quickening the circulation, and thus enhancing the illusion of the moment. So the poet says, "O for a drink of wine—old wine that has been cooled for a hundred years in some deep cavern—wine that by its taste makes you think of the goddess of flowers, and the delight of green nature in the country, and dances of country youth, and the songs of Provence, the great country of wine-making and of passionate song,—that makes you think also about the merriment of the brown-faced peasants and peasant girls at the time of the harvest dances! O let me have a very large cup of such wine—a beaker full of it, and full of all the southern warmth and happiness that seems to be in such vintages—full of the true water of the Muses' spring—red as a blush, with pretty bubbles in a row like beads, shining like little eyes along the edge of the cup —the cup on which lips are red like blood from the stain of the brightly coloured wine. Having such a drink, and hearing your music, then I should want nothing more than this—to follow you unseen into the dark forest, and never return!"

Why this desire to go away? I think that everything beautiful and gentle sometimes gives us this desire to leave

[1] Hippocrene: On the mountain of Helikon in Greece, which was sacred to the Muses, there was said to be a wonderful fountain called Hippocrene or the Horse-fountain; for it was brought into existence by a stroke of the hoof of the winged horse Pegasus, a divine steed. Whoever could drink of that fountain, it was believed, would become a great poet.

the busy world of men,—simply because the beauty or the sweetness that we see contrasts so painfully with the cruelty and the selfishness of the world's struggle. And this is the poet's thought.

3

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou amongst the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

It is not only the desire to forget the life of cities that comes upon the poet with this ecstasy of delight in the bird's song; he is not only vexed with the world because of its harsh side; he is tortured also by the sudden feeling of its impermanency, of the perishable nature of the few things that men can love—health, strength, youth, joy and affection. "Yes," he repeats, "I wish that I could go away, far away, and disappear—nay, that I could even melt away, and by ceasing to exist as a man, forget all the pain and trouble of this world, forget all that you, O happy bird, know nothing about—the weariness and the excitement and the torment of city life, where men, striving to live and work, must hear all about them sounds of sorrow and pain; where old age comes upon men like a paralysis, leaving them trembling grey wrecks; where even young men fail, and turn white like ghosts and as weak, and die before knowing anything about happiness;—where it is impossible to think about reality at all without pain and despair; where no woman can long remain beautiful, and where even the passion of a lover can not last more than a day."

4

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

The poet rises up, and goes out into the wood, under the trees, to listen. "I will go to you, without the inspiration and joy of wine; I can have no such luxuries; I can not ride in the chariot of Bacchus, drawn by leopards; the god of wine is not my friend. But I will go to you full of the wine of poetry, lifted by poetry as upon wings, however feeble, confused or slow be the motion of my poor dull brain. And now I am with you. The night is all beautiful and gentle. Perhaps the moon is enthroned in the sky like a queen-fairy, and the stars are shining like little fairies all around her. But, here, under the trees, there is no light, except what comes through the branches when the wind blows the leaves apart, as it passes through the leafy darkness and the mossy winding paths of the garden."

5

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorne, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

"It is here too dark for me to see the flowers at my feet, or the fragrant blossoms above me on the trees; but in this

odorous darkness, I can guess what they must be—judging from the month of the season—for each month gives gifts of fruit or flowers to the grass and the low wild shrubs and the wild fruit trees. There should be the white blossom of the hawthorn tree, and the flower of the eglantine, famous in old pastoral poetry, and violets, already dying, because the spring is passing away, and I suppose they are hidden now under the leaves;—then there ought to be musk-roses, for these are the first born flowers of the middle of May—full of perfumed sweetness—an intoxication of perfume, making fragrant even the dew upon them. Later, in summer evenings, all about these musk-roses the flies will gather with a musical humming."

6

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful death,
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

"Here in the growing gloom I listen. Many a time before now I have found myself wishing to die, and I have thought of death as a beautiful and lovable power, giving ease of heart to all men; I have called him affectionate names in many a verse composed in my mind, in order to persuade him to take my calm life away from me, into the beautiful air about me. And now, here listening, O bird! I feel as if it were very delightful indeed to die, I feel it more than I ever did before. I should like suddenly to cease to be, in the middle of the night, to die now without any pain, while you are singing there all your soul, and with such extreme joy in your own song. And if I were to die

now, how strange it would be. You would still keep on singing, and I should not be able to hear you—I should be as insensible to the sweetness of your music as the sod, as the earth and grass under my feet. I think that I should like to live a little longer and hear you sing."

7

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

The last six lines of this stanza are especially famous, forming two separate but familiar quotations. The first refers to the story of Ruth in the Bible; the second to the poetry of fancy, especially of supernatural fancy. The book of Ruth is quite different from anything else in the Bible; it is a kind of gentle love story, and full of simple pathos; whereas the story of Esther is more like a novel, containing both tragedy and comedy. These are the only approaches to pure story-telling in the Old Testament, and the book of Ruth is the only really beautiful story in the Bible. There is nothing very religious about it; it is simply the narrative of how a widow and her only daughter went to a strange country after the death of the husband and father, and tried to make a living by gleaning in the fields, until they met with a relative, who took pity upon them, and finally married Ruth. The other reference may be less easy for you to understand without explanation. Many of the mediæval romances and fairy-tales describe enchanted castles situated in the middle of dangerous seas. If a brave knight of pure life can get to the castle, and preserve himself

by his virtue from all the temptations of the magician, he can obtain some great reward, such as treasures of gold and silver, or a princess for wife. But he must first encounter the storms on those perilous seas. The expression about charming magic casement does not of course mean charming a casement, or window, but some person behind the window, who throws it open perhaps to listen. The suggestion is of some princess, confined in the enchanted castle, and waiting for the good knight to come who shall free her from the power of wizard or giant.

"I shall die and utterly pass away—perhaps my songs, my poems will quickly be forgotten. But you, happy bird, are immortal; you were not born to die as I am. No hungry generations (devouring Time) shall silence your voice. The song you are now singing, on this very night, was heard thousands of years ago. Emperors heard it, and peasants. It has been celebrated in the poetry of all times and all countries. Perhaps it was the memory of such a song as this that touched the heart of Ruth when she mourned for her lost home, and stood weeping in the cornfields of strangers in a strange land. And it was this song that so often, in the old romances, charmed the hearts of princesses and fair ladies in their castles, as they stood at windows opening upon the dangerous seas, in their enchanted home, in lonesome fairyland."

8

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
  To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
  As she is famed to do, deceiving elf!
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
  Past the near meadows, over the still stream
    Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
      In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
  Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

Very possibly in speaking of hungry generations in the preceding stanza, Keats may have been thinking of the struggle of the world as well as of ravening time, and about his own sense of loneliness in a community that gave him neither the love nor the sympathy for which his nature longed. At all events, his use of the word "forlorn"—meaning left alone, abandoned, deserted—still more forcibly reminds him of his own position, and brings him back, with a sudden shock, to the world of realities.

"Why, the very word forlorn, like the sudden clang of a great bell, breaks my meditation and brings my mind back from thinking about you, O nightingale, to the subject of my lonesome self. Good-bye, it is not true that a poet's imagination can deceive him altogether about the world and himself. Imagination is a deceiving fairy, but her magic is not strong enough to keep us from feeling the pain of life. Farewell, O bird! Now your sad song is becoming faint beyond the next fields, now I hear it on the other side of the river, now it is far away up the side of the further hill. And now I do not hear it at all; the bird must have gone far down into the next valley, among the trees. Now it seems to me as if I had been dreaming, either asleep or awake. The music is gone. Am I dreaming or not dreaming?"

We have lingered somewhat over this wonderful poem, but if a student even knows only the "Ode to the Nightingale," he knows the best of Keats, and I think it was worth the time. Presently we must bid good-bye to Keats, and take up another subject—not without regret; for Keats is really worth many months of study. Before concluding, however, I want to call your attention to a historical mistake in one of the sonnets of Keats, which you will find in almost any anthology. I mean the sonnet upon the poet's first impression of reading Chapman's translation of Homer. Really Chapman's translation of Homer requires a great deal of patience for anybody to read to-day, but it was a more faithful translation than that of Pope, whom Keats

detested as an artificial poet. Were he alive to-day, Keats would certainly prefer our modern prose translation of Homer to Chapman's, but there were no good prose translations then. Keats was able to get an idea of Homer's beauty from this version, and he expressed his delight with it in the very beautiful sonnet I am referring to. He said that he had felt like some watcher of the skies

> When a new planet swims into his ken,
> Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific.

Critics have repeatedly objected that the reference to Cortez is wrong, because it was not Cortez but Balboa who first reached the Pacific by way of Darien. The error, I presume to say, is not an important one; but what I especially wish to observe is that by substituting the name Balboa for the name of Cortez, the verse would still be absolutely correct, if we leave out the word stout; for Balboa, having the accent on the second syllable, can be so read into the line as to make the verse right. Yet I do not think that any true poet would ever agree to do this, because although accuracy might be gained, the effect would be greatly diminished by the loss of the splendid adjective "stout," used in the old Biblical meaning of strong and bold. Critics are very fond of picking out little faults and dwelling upon them. When their opinions are put into practice the result is generally dismal. It was dismal in the revised version of the Bible. It would be dismal also in the case of Keats. The mistakes of a great poet like Keats have more literary value than the corrections of his critics. We shall next make a short study of the very curious and unequal poet Thomas Hood.

CHAPTER XV

NOTE ON HOOD

Although we can not devote very much space to the consideration of Hood's merits, we can not pass him over lightly in a general study of English literature. No man was at one time more widely known and more sincerely loved by the English public than Thomas Hood. No man ever gave to that public so much amusement. He was for some twenty years the great English comic poet; in other words, for nearly a generation he represented in himself the joyous and merry aspect of English life. Comic poetry is never great poetry, for to the thinker there is nothing in this world which is absurd or ridiculous, nothing that is not worthy of serious consideration; and great poetry can be produced only by a great thinker. But this does not mean that in literature light poetry has no value. It has a value of a special kind, and one that a Japanese student should not absolutely ignore. When we meet a strange person for the first time, in whom we are interested, we study his face to decide whether we shall like or dislike him; and, quite unconsciously, we discover at once two facts regarding him —his liability to be pleased and to be displeased in certain ways. In order that we should determine how to conduct ourselves towards him, we want to know what will make him laugh as well as what will cause him pain or sorrow. With a strange literature, we must not content ourselves by looking at only the serious side. A literature is, after all, but the expression of a great national individuality, the reflection of the soul of a people. And in order to understand the spirit of a national literature, we must know what makes people laugh, as well as what makes them weep. Now Hood tells us this better than any other Eng-

lishman of the century, even though he is becoming a little old fashioned to-day, and his laurels have latterly been given to the very witty verse-maker Gilbert. But Gilbert, whose life has been chiefly connected with the drama, never really entered into the love of the people as did Hood. His humour has been of a much more limited kind—not a humour for households, but a humour for the theatre. Hood will be of use to you, I think, for another very special reason. The great mass of his comic work consists of clever punning, a punning most dependent upon the use of common English idioms. Now many a student, having an excellent knowledge of written English, literary English, is quite at a loss when he comes to deal with English conversational idioms. They have nothing to do with his personal experience outside of books; and they need a great deal of explanation. Well, I can think of no better and quicker way of learning familiar idioms than by reading the comic poems of Hood,—especially the comic ballads, which are in themselves a veritable museum of idioms. I make these remarks only by way of suggestion, for our time is too short to allow of analysing many examples of what I refer to. I shall, however, quote a few verses of one ballad in illustration of what I mean.

Ben Battle was a soldier bold,
  And used to war's alarms;
But a cannon-ball took off his legs,
  So he laid down his arms.

Now as they bore him off the field
  Said he, "Let others shoot!
For here I leave my second leg
  And the Forty-Second Foot."

The last line of the first stanza is of course a pun, but it is also an idiom; "to lay down one's arms" is to yield, to surrender. The last line of the second stanza gives us an example of the peculiar English nomenclature of regiments.

It is more common to speak of the Foot than of the Infantry: the Forty-second Foot means the Forty-second Regiment of Infantry. Another pun furnishes us with another curious military term, the suicide of the hero being thus recounted—

So round his melancholy neck
A rope he did entwine,
And for the second time in life
Enlisted in the Line.

"Line" means a rope of any kind, as for instance a clothes-line, a rope on which clothes are hung to dry. But it also means infantry; regiments of the line are the regular regiments of infantry, as distinguished from volunteer regiments. Another stanza gives a still better illustration of the use of common idioms; but the whole poem is full of such examples:

And there he hung, till he was dead
As any nail in town;
For, though distress *had cut him up*,
It could not *cut him down.*

The third line gives us the common expression about "being cut up," or "feeling cut up," meaning to be unhappy. To cut down in the fourth line is a familiar term referring to the removal of a criminal's body from the gallows by the cutting of the rope. When I tell you that Hood's comic poems alone comprise about four volumes of this kind of verse, you will understand what a treasury of idioms they contain. But at this point I shall leave the subject of his humour to speak about himself and about the few great serious things which he did. For this man had a double gift. One day he would make all England laugh, and the next day he would make them weep. The tears remain; the hearts are still touched by these verses of pathos and simple beauty. But the laughter has ceased; and the funny poems, as I tell you, are chiefly valuable for the study of puns, household phrases, idioms, and mere tricks with words.

Thomas Hood was born at the close of the eighteenth century, in 1799. He was the son of a publisher who, being unfortunate in business, was not able to give his children a finished education. Hood had but very ordinary schooling, and at an early age attempted journalism. In these days he would perhaps have made a fortune as a journalist, but at that time the newspaper press was still young, and he found it very difficult to live. His whole after-life, until 1845 when he died, was a constant and bitter struggle with poverty and sickness—troubles increased by the fact that he had a large family to support. Yet in spite of all his struggles he exhibited no sign of melancholy or discouragement, and even within a short time of his death he was making every one laugh by the funny things that he sent to the press. He had begun by attempting serious verse, but though his poetry had considerable merit, he soon found that he could not live by it. Then he attempted comic verse. When the public discovered his gift, they could not get enough of it, and the poet presently found himself under the obligation of writing something funny every few days, whether sick or well, whether inspired or not inspired. This simply means that he was forced to become a hack-writer. It is not surprising that of the first five large volumes of his poems the greater part must be condemned as hack-work, imperfect verse. What is surprising is the existence of those few pieces which every English person knows by heart, and which have found their way into all the anthologies and the school text-books. These are especially "The Song of the Shirt," "The Bridge of Sighs," "I Remember," and "The Dream of Eugene Aram." Certainly these will never die; and so many allusions are constantly made to them in literature that you can not afford not to know them. Doubtless you have them in some form where you can refer to them at any time, so that we need not repeat them here. But I may make a few critical remarks about them. "The Song of the Shirt" is written in the common dialect of a

London working woman; there is nothing particularly literary about it, except its absolute naturalness and simple truth of pathos. Hood saw and knew all about the suffering of the poor women in London obliged to make shirts for a living. By working seventeen or eighteen hours without stopping, a girl could make just enough money to keep herself from dying of hunger, but not enough to buy her clothes or fire, or to give her comforts of any kind. The life was so terrible that only a brave person could attempt to bear it. Many commited suicide; many became prostitutes. All this was before the invention of the sewing machine, and even the invention of the sewing machine has not made the condition of the sewing woman much better. Hood made one of these women tell the story of her suffering in a song, the song of the shirt; and it touched all hearts. "The Bridge of Sighs" might be the story of one who had tried to live by shirtmaking—though we are not assured of the fact. You have heard of the Bridge of Sighs in Venice—a roofed bridge which leads from a palace to a prison above a canal; but the title of Hood's poem has nothing to do with that bridge. He adopted the name only for its poetry, as signifying the bridge of sorrows. The bridge he means is either London Bridge or one of the numerous other bridges of the great city, from which unhappy women threw themselves in despair at the difficulties of life. For hundreds of years suicides have been committed in this way; and even now at regular intervals dead bodies are taken out of the river. Hood describes the finding of such a body—a beautiful girl, probably about to become a mother, who finding no way of hiding her shame or providing for the child to be born, had drowned herself. The poem is simply a series of tender reflections upon the event, full of kindness, tolerance, and a few piercing remarks about the so-called "Christianity" of the world. No one can even to-day pass over Westminster Bridge or London Bridge for the first time without thinking of that poem as he

looks down into the water. Like the other poem it is very simple; but it is not written in the language of a poor woman, but in the language of the great poet. "The Dream of Eugene Aram" I think you have all read. It will live long in literature because of qualities entirely different from those exhibited in the "Song of the Shirt" and "Bridge of Sighs." Hood was not less gifted in touching the sensation of fear than in touching that of tenderness. The story of Eugene Aram had inspired others beside Hood; it inspired one of Bulwer Lytton's novels. But the poem of Hood is a greater thing in English literature than even the novel of Bulwer Lytton, though it is very short. It gives the sensation of horror and fear by the simplest possible methods, and without the aid of any supernatural machinery. I suppose you know that Eugene Aram was a schoolmaster, who murdered a man for money, secretly and in such a way that it was very difficult to detect the murderer. But he could not hide his remorse from his pupils; and one day he told a boy all the circumstances of the murder, pretending that he was only telling a dream. This led to his arrest, conviction, and execution. I mentioned one other poem by the title of the first line, "I Remember," and I think that whoever reads this once is likely to remember. It is a little poem that describes nothing but the memories of a child, yet so that in all parts of the world the experiences will seem to be personal for whoever reads the verses, no matter what his language or country. The great merit which they have, I think, is what I have called elsewhere the merit of universal truth; and such truth must always be simple. Another special faculty which Hood possessed, but which he was not able even to develop as it might have been developed but for his struggle with poverty, was that of creating what we call the Grotesque. The grotesque is a combination of the terrible with the amusing; it is a difficult thing to do well, and there are very few modern poets capable of it. It must be an inborn gift. But Hood pos-

sessed it, and it appeared especially in such compositions as "The Forge," and the long composition of "Miss Kilmansegg and her Precious Leg," the story of a very rich heiress, who having lost one of her legs through a riding accident, has an artificial leg made of gold, and is finally murdered by a man who married her for money. This poem especially is rich in the grotesque element; but I want to refer to it for another reason—namely, that it concludes with a few lines about the philosophy of money which have become famous, and which you ought to know, even if you should not have time to read so long a poem.

Gold, gold, gold, gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammered and rolled;
Heavy to get, and light to hold;
Hoarded, bartered, bought, and sold,
Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled;
Spurned by the young, but hugged by the old
To the very verge of the churchyard mould;
Price of many a crime untold:
Gold, gold, gold, gold!
Good or bad a thousand-fold!
How widely its agencies vary—
To save—to ruin—to curse—to bless—
As even its minted coins express,
Now stamped with the image of Good Queen Bess,
And now of a Bloody Mary!

It would be hard to say more about the subject in the same number of lines, and the simile of the coins with their images of good and bad rulers to the good and evil effects of money, is one of the most powerful in all English poetry. But here we must bid farewell to Hood. I have only desired to kindle your interest in him as a verse-maker, not belonging to the great ranks of the poets, but of extreme value for the student because of his richness of idiom, and his wonderful cleverness, as a great humorist, in the use of the colloquial.

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF "SARTOR RESARTUS"

Carlyle is in some respects the most important figure in nineteenth century literature. Remember, when I say this, that I am speaking of literature, as distinguished from science or scientific philosophy, or scientific writing of any kind. Carlyle is not the greatest English philosopher by any means; but he is the greatest literary philosopher of our times—I mean the nineteenth century. The philosopher as man-of-letters, the poet philosopher or essayist, is rather a rare figure in English literature. We have plenty of philosophers; indeed, I think that English philosophy is now the first in the world, though Germany and France may still refuse to acknowledge the fact. But we have had scarcely any literary personage who could be called a great philosophical influence, with the exception of Carlyle. Carlyle represents, though perhaps in a smaller way, in English literature what Goethe represents in German literature. Or, again, we might say that he represents in English literature something that Michelet represents in French literature—a great emotional power and influence created under the obsession of a single great idea. Emerson is another figure of this kind, the only one that America has produced. Now, philosophers of this literary class do not exactly make a new philosophy. They are emotional rather than logical thinkers; they do not so often find new truths for us as they make new applications of older truths. And if they do find a new truth sometimes, it is rather through feeling than through reasoning. But they exert more influence than the larger thinkers do—the pure philosophers—because they are more easily understood and more widely read. To a certain extent they help the progress of the

higher philosophy by interpreting it to the people, or at least such parts of it as they are willing to accept. Carlyle is especially a teacher of this kind. He presents in marvellous emotional speech many of the best thoughts of the greatest modern thinkers; and if he is one-sided, we must be still thankful for the form and the force of his message. This message is especially given in his "Sartor Resartus," and "Sartor Resartus" is a book which ought to be as well known to English students as Goethe's "Faust." It is likely to become so, at all events; every year it is being more and more read, every year new editions are being issued, and recently the book has been put forth in illustrated forms, with some eighty pictures. Because the expression is sometimes obscure, and because of the hard slow thinking that the book requires, it might have been ignored a few years ago in a course of university reading. But this is no longer possible. The book has become too great an influence, and we must bend ourselves to the task of comprehending it.

I think that the question of comprehending it, without assistance, depends very much upon the age and experience of the reader. My own experience was this; as a young man less than twenty years of age, I repeatedly tried to read the book and could not. I could not understand a single page of it. There were indeed sentences which dazzled and charmed my imagination, but I was not very sure what they meant. At the age of about twenty-five I tried to read the book again, with the same result; I could understand nothing, except what appeared to me somewhat religious in a narrow sense, and which therefore repelled me; for at that time I disliked everything religious very much indeed. But after reaching middle life, when I had read a great deal, and had been able to make some serious study of modern philosophy, I opened the book again, and every page was full not only of light but of lightning. Many times since I have re-read it, and each time it seems to me greater and wider and more astonishing. I shall now try

to lecture about it in a general way; but the points upon which I am particularly anxious to dwell are the points in harmony with eastern philosophy and nineteenth century science. Wherever the two unite, you will find the full power of Carlyle as a thinker—there he has touched everlasting truth.

The book is eccentrically arranged as well as eccentrically written; and before attempting a summary, please to keep clearly in mind the fact that it has three main divisions; also that the second or middle division, which is autobiography, is quite independent of the other two parts between which it is inserted. Unless you remember this, your notes may become somewhat confused. Nevertheless, after having thought a good deal about the plan of this lecture, I have decided that it will not do to separate the autobiography from the philosophy, nor to adopt any other arrangement than that of the author.

The name of the book means "the tailor repatched," an extraordinary title, but not out of keeping with the extraordinary subject, which is the Philosophy of Clothes. And the meaning of the title becomes obvious before we read very far. To re-carpenter a carpenter or to re-tailor a tailor, means simply to do the man's work over again better than it was done at first. We now can see that Carlyle wishes it to be understood that he is going to do over again something which has not previously been well done—and that something is the philosophy of clothes. Here I may observe that it seems to me the whole idea of the book from beginning to end was inspired by a single stanza of the great poet Goethe—

> In Being's floods, in Action's storm
> I walk and work, above, beneath,
> Work and weave in endless motion!
> Birth and Death,
> An Infinite Ocean;
> A seizing and giving

The fire of Living;
'Tis thus at the roaring loom of time I ply,
And weave for God the Garment thou seest Him by.

This is the song of the Earth Spirit in "Faust," and it really contains the germ of all the philosophy in "Sartor Resartus," though only in potential form. The meaning of course is that the phenomenal universe is only the visible garment of the invisible infinite—a thought quite Buddhist in itself, and also quite true as a scientific fact, considering the mystery of matter. Nearly all the great thoughts of the world are thus in harmony; it is only in small ideas that I can find disagreement.

At all events, whether my theory is right or wrong, the philosophy of clothes appears in the very first chapter of the book; but it is not put forth as Carlyle's own invention. He pretended that it was the translation of a curious German book, written by an unknown philosopher with the extraordinary name of Teufelsdröckh, and he made the style exactly resemble a literary translation from the German, adopting many of the literary methods of Richter for the sake of their curious beauty. This is why the style of "Sartor Resartus" seems to us at first sight so strange.

By way of introduction we are told that although there have been countless books written about cloth and silk and all other textures, the most important of all textures has not been written about—"the only real tissue, which man's soul wears as its outmost wrapper and overall." Does this mean the body as the garment of the soul? Yes, to a certain extent. But if so, why should the writer say that the subject has been overlooked by science, since there are hundreds of thousands of books about the body? Well, Carlyle's thought is this: much has indeed been written about the body, as form or otherwise, but not about the body as the garment of the soul, not about the body as the symbol of an infinite mystery. That is why the work already done on the subject is so unsatisfactory. The most wonderful re-

lation of man, the relation that he bears to the universe and to the unknown powers that made the universe, is never considered at all as it should be considered. Yet to a thinking man the miracle is all about it: "that living flood, holding the whole street, of all qualities and ages, knowest thou whence it is coming, whither it is going?" The ordinary man would answer, "Oh, those people are going home, or going to their business"; but the thinker's question requires a much larger answer. The true answer is that they come out of an absolute mystery, out of eternity, like the world itself, and that although they may seem to be going back to their own homes only, they are really all of them going back into the infinite mystery out of which they came. And what are they? Can anybody answer? They are spirits made visible by a garment or dress of flesh which they wear. That is all we know. The force within, the force that moves and thinks within each of us, no philosopher could ever tell us what it is. It is manifested to the senses only by means of its dress. We have reason to suppose that it is a part of the universal force, the universal mystery, but that is all. Thus the mere sight of a man walking down the street is really one of the most extraordinary, one of the most mysterious, and one of the most unexplainable things in this world. Yet very few people ever think about the matter. Is it not worth thinking about? Carlyle says that it is—wherefore he has written this book; a book about the mystery of the universe considered as a garment, as a dress. Just as the man appears to our eyes only because of the body or flesh that he has, so the only Reality, the Soul of all things, has been made manifest to us through the material universe, which is the robe that it wears.

A robe, a dress, a covering of any sort for the body—what idea does it immediately suggest to you? You will think, even if you do not say, that the comparison does not at first sight seem satisfactory, because a dress is something that has often to be changed, something that wears

out quickly and has to be thrown way. Yet if you will reflect for a moment that Time is only relative, you will recognise that the comparison is complete. The body of man is worn out quickly like his clothes, and has in the same way to be discarded. Death is our change of clothes, nothing more. But this is not all; the comparison is excellent even as applied to the entire universe, with all the millions of suns and planets and moons belonging to it. All of them wear out, just as surely as a dress wears out; the whole universe must decay and disappear, to be succeeded by a new universe, by another shining garment for the infinite spirit. The comparison is not even new, though Goethe happened to put it in a somewhat new way; it is enormously old; it is in the Bible—

> The heavens are the work of thy hands—they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, *all of them shall grow old like a garment. And as a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed.*

Of course the Hebrew poet who wrote these magnificent verses did not know the universe as we know it to-day; he imagined the sky to be a solid arch or vault, and the lights of heaven to be like great lamps. But the beauty of what he said only continues to grow with time, because with all his limited knowledge he perceived in a dim way one eternal and tremendous truth,—the impermanency of all forms.

This is the real introduction to the book, or rather to the spirit of the book. We have then the first great statement, that all visible matter is but a garment or manifestation of the invisible; and that man's body itself is not a permanent reality, but only the symbol or covering of him. Yet the same thing might be said of the body of a horse, a cow, a fish, even a tree. All these too are but unreal symbols of one eternal reality. The great distinction between man and other animals or forms of life is that he has a double covering. Besides his body, the covering of all that is real within him, he has a second covering of clothes. Of course this

is a fact that everybody knows; but how many think about it, and perceive what it really means?

In order to understand what it means, we must first try to imagine all humanity without clothes. It is scarcely possible to imagine a civilised society in which nobody wears any clothes. With grim humour, the author asks us to imagine a naked minister addressing a naked house of parliament, or a reception at some royal court, at which everybody should be absolutely naked. Of course the mere idea is absurd. But why should it be absurd? It is not easy to answer at once. A correct answer would require a considerable amount of thinking, and it is the thinking about this problem which forms a considerable part of the book, and which leads us to consider many other problems of an equally deep and strange kind.

Clothes, or clothing, the philosopher calls the Foundation of Society; he means of course that without clothes there could be no civilisation of a high degree. He asks us how could one even carry money about him if he had no clothing, no pockets. I am inclined to think that his views here, at least his illustrations, are a little extreme. As a matter of fact, naked societies have existed, in which certain simple moral and religious codes were fully developed —Polynesian societies, for example, and certain African societies. Very barbarous and simple forms of society they were; but they were certainly societies, governed by rules of conduct. Again as to the question of no pockets and no money, in these societies—or at least in some of them—what represented money was worn round the neck fastened to a string, or attached to the body in some other way. But we may accept, as a general statement, the author's position that clothes are at least a foundation of true civilisation; and that the present complicated forms of society could not very well exist without clothes,—even supposing the constitution of mankind able to bear all exposures to climate.

Carlyle accepts the evolutional philosophy of clothes to

a limited extent. Clothes began with the human desire for ornament. In those savage communities where clothes were not worn, it was at least the custom to decorate the body in some way or other; for example, the Polynesians tattooed themselves, and other peoples painted the body different colours. Eventually with the invention of the simplest industries of weaving, sewing, etc., garments of some kind were found to suit the purpose of decoration better than paint or tattooing. But in some cases, as among races of hunters, the skins of wild animals would have been the first kind of clothes. And in some tropical countries, the first clothing would seem to have been leaves taken from certain trees, for there are still tribes using only this kind of clothing. Before the use of clothing there could scarcely have been any distinction of classes, no real aristocracy or nobility; universal nudity would have proclaimed too powerfully the general equality of all. But I think that Carlyle goes too far in suggesting that there would have been no distinction whatever. There would have still been the distinction of strength, of activity, of experience, and cunning; and these would have been quite sufficient to make a class of rulers or chiefs, obeyed by the rest, and trusted in time of danger. It would be altogether wrong to think that the invention of cloth was a sudden thing, and that it produced sudden changes in the character of mankind. All changes have been gradual, and all evolutions have been very slow. There is a large truth here suggested by Carlyle, that a very important relation exists between the development of clothing and the development of social distinctions. Each must have had a powerful influence upon the other.

Another point upon which I think Mr. Spencer would not have agreed with Carlyle is the declaration that modesty was developed by the use of clothes. The statement is rather sweeping. We have plenty of evidence that among peoples and communities accustomed to nakedness, peoples who live in very warm climates, modesty has been very

considerably developed. Indeed, among almost unclad tribes, there are some more virtuous in regard to sexual matters than the most highly civilised races. I mention this fact because it is important that you should not be deceived by some of the extreme opinions of Carlyle. Modesty must have developed according to intelligence, rather than according to the evolution of clothing; but it is very probable that clothing has much assisted in developing the ideal and the more delicate forms of the virtue. That is about as far as the modern thinker dare venture to go. Now, for the western nations at least, clothing has certainly a very large relation to habits of modesty, but I do not know that the hearts of the people are any purer because they happen to have more or less clothes. Very often the fact is the other way. At least, clothes have become not only the covering of the man, but the mask of his vices.

I have used the word mask—the subject of masks will presently be in order. It will introduce us to the third important point of the argument.

The second point is the relation between the development of society, of civilisation, and clothes—the fact that social distinctions are indicated, if not made, by clothes in all countries; and that is a very important matter to think about. But why is it an important matter to think about? Because class distinctions cultivate in the first place self-respect, the honest pride of the man, the honest knowledge of his worth in relation to society at large. And this means also the development of effort, intellectual competition, indeed, competition of every kind through which a man can climb from a lower to a higher rank, and effort of every kind by which he can benefit his fellow men. In this sense Carlyle is quite right in speaking of clothes as the foundation of society, but you must not take his words too literally; here you may understand by "clothes," class-distinctions and social differences, with all that they imply.

And now we come to the third point in the argument, the point about masks. All clothing is a mask, for the body at least. I have said that clothing, considered as a mask, often helps men to hide their vices, their faults, their deficiencies of all kinds. In other words, we might call clothing a sort of material falsehood, a kind of hypocrisy. But at this point you should stop and ask yourselves the questions, "Is naked truth always respectable? Is it even always good, from any point of view? May it not sometimes be very bad? And falsehood, is it always bad? Is it not sometimes quite excusable? *Is it not sometimes good? Is it not sometimes not only good, but very good? Not only very good, but even divine?*"

The answers to these questions must depend a good deal upon your capacity for thinking—especially upon your capacity for thinking what falsehood means. It may mean many thousands of things. Truth may mean a great many thousand things. But I shall take, not out of Carlyle, a simple example. A person does you, unintentionally, a great wrong; and, as you understand that it was done by mistake, you pretend not to feel the injury at all, and you speak to the person who has injured you, as if nothing had happened. In this matter you are not acting quite truthfully; you are pretending to feel in a way that you can not feel; you are acting falsely, or acting a falsehood. But from the moral point of view of all religions, you are acting nobly, kindly, generously. Any one of you can think of thousands of examples in daily life, in your own lives, in the lives of those you love most, in which things which are not true, and actions which are not true, are being constantly said or done for the kindest reasons and with the happiest results. But you can remember also a great many very unpleasant experiences in your lives, or in the lives of friends, caused by telling the truth, caused by the truthful expression of hateful or resentful or envious feeling. I

mean that you must have had a thousand proofs of the great fact that truth is often wickedness and that falsehood is often pure love and goodness.

A shallow thinker is very apt to imagine that the value of truth is altogether absolute and unquestionable. But, as a matter of fact, we can not live in human society by truth—I mean, we can not live and act according to our own feelings and opinions. Every one of us must sacrifice his feelings occasionally for the sake of other people; and you can not do this, you can not perform the ordinary duties of life, without pretending a little to be what you are not. All this life of ours, in every country, is governed by rules that are often painful, tiresome, seemingly unjust, certainly difficult to obey; but we must obey them very cheerfully, so far as outward appearances are concerned. Every one of us must act a little, and must recognise that the world is indeed a great theatre, in which everybody must play a part, and must wear the mask of an actor, all for the good of the world and for the happiness of mankind.

Relatively speaking, nothing is so necessary to man as illusion, as the beautifully untruthful. Human ideals, human aspirations, have all been more or less based upon the impossible, the untrue. But how much good has been thus accomplished!

Now you will recognise the importance of the third point, of clothes as a means of hiding. Clothes are symbols of much more than rank or position; they are especially symbols of conventions. Conventions are false, in more respects than one. But society is founded upon conventions, is regulated by conventions, is policed by conventions, is protected by conventions, is evolved by conventions. The next best thing in this world to being good is to pretend to be good, to try to make people think that you are good. Why? Because the habit of trying to appear to be a little better than you are, really helps you at last to become better than you are. Now all the conventions of society rep-

resent a sort of universal discipline, by which all men and women are obliged to act as if they were a little better than they really can be. An ideal is set before them, like a lesson, and they have to learn that lesson, and try to obey its teaching; and as soon as the lesson has been very well learned, a new and harder lesson is given. Moral progress in this world has been very slow, indeed, compared with other kinds of progress; but such progress as we have really made has been accomplished by the wearing of the Clothes of Convention.

From this point you can already imagine what a variety of subjects the author is likely to touch upon—religion as one kind of clothing for the human mind, loyalty and self-sacrifice as other kinds, military regulations and activities as yet other kinds. And treated according to his most magical though eccentric method, these dry subjects are made to blossom in a wonderful manner.

Here I think I have said enough regarding the first part of the book; we may now begin to look at the second part—the autobiographical part. It comes, this Book II., like an interruption into the midst of the argument about clothes—but in a most interesting way. For it is thus introduced in order that the reader may understand how the author arrived at these convictions about the mystery of life and the mystery of all things. Wisdom comes chiefly from pain; and he is going to tell us how through great sorrow he became wise.

The philosophical value of the biography lies in the fact that it represents the experience of a great number of intelligent and generous-hearted persons able to think deeply. It is not because Carlyle paints his own history, so much as because that history is the history of many men. Nevertheless, some of the purely personal parts of it have their personal interest. The autobiographer speaks of his parents and their poverty, of his life as a peasant's child, of the mingled bitterness and sweetness of those years passed in

his native village. He attributes all that is good in his character chiefly to the early teachings of his mother—only a simple peasant woman, but full of goodness and full of faith. Later on he tells us that he learned very little either from his teachers at various schools or from his professors at the university; they could give him only dry facts; they did nothing for his soul, for the better part of his nature. The only person who did that for him, was his mother. But her teaching does not appear to have always been very gentle. He was severely restrained in many directions, and taught at an early age that truth which it is a misfortune to have to learn later in life. There is a sentence in the second chapter of the Book II. in which the author sums up this truth after a very original fashion. "Too early and too thoroughly we can not be trained to know that Would, in this world of ours, is a mere zero to Should, and for the most part as the smallest of fractions even to Shall." Substitute for should, the words "ought to" and for shall understand purpose, future intention or desire;—and understand for would, "wish"—then you will see how excellent a statement this is. Or if we take shall in the sense of "must," still the meaning remains very striking; for even what we must do, is as nothing compared with what we ought to do. As for what we would do, what we wish to do, it is very seldom indeed that in this world we are allowed a chance to do it. The whole of the biography subsequently turns a good deal upon these maxims—illustrates them in powerful ways. The next striking discovery of the autobiographer was much later in life, at the university, perhaps,—the discovery that even untruth may have a very great value. "Probably," he says, "imposture is of a sanative, anodyne nature, and man's gullibility not his least blessing." Later on he explains this much more fully. What are called by religious people pious frauds, pious falsehoods, pious devices—what are called in Buddhism *Hoben*—illustrate this fact; and the whole of the philoso-

phy of clothes is based upon it in Carlyle's book. Whether in religion, or in politics, or in education, certain devices of not a really truthful, but nevertheless of an indispensable character, have been found to greatly assist progress. Of course such philosophical positions must be accepted with proper reservation, and must be acted upon with great moral caution. But the fact is a very important one, and a man who can not learn it in his youth, is likely afterwards to make great mistakes in his struggle with the world. For example, the earnest, honest, strictly truthful man, who does not recognise the larger relations of life, is very apt to denounce in anger numbers of social conditions which he sees to be false, simply because they are false, without asking himself whether the false may not have, for the time being, a certain value of truth. And what is the reason why the world has always refused to listen even to the greatest men who attacked religion on the ground that religion is not true? In spite of all arguments, humanity feels that even religious fables have their worth; and that it is wrong to attack them or ridicule them until they prove themselves to have become obstacles in the way of moral or intellectual development. We shall have to return to this subject later; it is treated very interestingly in the third part of the book.

But although, in learning these two things, the young man had learned much, he was destined to pass through many severe trials before he could learn any higher truths. He had yet to learn really to understand the lesson of life, and the meaning of the world. He learned it chiefly through the consequences of his first love-affair. Love being the most powerful of passions and emotions, it is the one through which a man can receive the greatest moral and mental pain. The story is very well told, and there is nothing at all extraordinary in its circumstances. The young university graduate, poor and without any great prospects before him, falls in love with the daughter of a rich house, who makes him believe that she returns his affection and

will marry him. But, at an unexpected moment, he is clearly given to understand that he was foolish even to think of such a thing, that he is of inferior rank, that he is poor and therefore contemptible in the eyes of the girl's family, and that he must not make his appearance at the house any more. This is of course a severe blow both to the love and to the pride of the man, but a strong man must be able to bear blows like this without flinching. What makes it hard in this case, however, is an act of treachery that accompanies it. The man who is really responsible for the whole trouble, the man who really is guilty of cruelty, and who gets the girl and marries her, happens to be the best friend of the sufferer, his university friend, a rich student, who has the advantage of wealth and social position. So the jilted lover suffers at once in his love, in his pride, and in his sense of friendship. His intellectual studies have further rendered his mind sceptical in religious matters; and with these misfortunes upon him, everything seems at once to crumble about him—love, ambition, religion, and friendship, all abandoned and disbelieved in. With a heart full of bitterness, and empty of faith in anything, he wanders about the world for a good many years, before he can recover some degree of wisdom. At last indeed it comes to him through further experience with pain, through a new sense of sympathy with the suffering of humanity in general; for pain teaches the sufferer how to understand pain in others. This is the experience of most generous minds; it is by their own suffering that they first really learn what the suffering of mankind is, and then they learn to think of the best way to answer the Riddle of Life. All religions have tried to answer that riddle; and although many religions appear to contradict each other in various ways, all of them agree upon one great truth, the truth of Pain as Duty. All religions teach suffering—tell us that the world is not a place of pleasure, but a place for suffering; and that not only should a man learn to bear pain, but he should even invite

and welcome pain in certain ways. Thus the fundamental Religion of Religions is the religion of pain; and when a man discovers this great truth, whether he believes in doctrines and dogmas or not, he learns to respect every great form of religion, for there is this truth in all of them which is as old as the world, and doubtless eternal.

Eternal—because there is another truth to be learned, after having learned this one, which explains it. Without Evil there could be no Good. Good exists only as the result of the struggle against evil. The one is necessary to the other as shadow to light in the vision of a landscape.

And there is yet a third truth in which the autobiographer puts faith, and which he learned when learning the others. Happiness is impossible to man, because as a Form, or Individual, he is finite and limited in all his capacities, while the mysterious Life that wells up within him is a part of the Infinite Being. Confined within the narrowest limits by his body, he remains infinite by his mind. Therefore nothing can possibly satisfy him. Give him the world for a plaything, give him a hundred worlds; after having had possession long enough to understand something about them, he would still be dissatisfied and want more. He would want the whole universe, and would even then not be satisfied. Religious philosophy here tells us how this dissatisfaction should be met. I understand that Buddhist philosophy teaches that it is our duty not to wish for anything finite or limited, but only for the infinite. Some Christian philosophy contains a kindred teaching—not quite so profound, I think, but equally good for religious purposes—that the ultimate Absolute, as a Person or God, is the only subject of holy wishing. For deep thinkers this disposition is not satisfactory, because Christianity insists upon the continuance of individuality after death and through all time as part of its doctrine; while oriental philosophy more rationally teaches the melting or merging of all individuality into the Absolute. Carlyle's position in "Sartor Resartus"

is very close to oriental philosophy; and it is very beautiful in its way.

I do not think I need speak more here of the mere story of the autobiography, beautiful as it is; these are the principal points of interest in it. Let us sum them up again before turning to the third part of the book.

The first wisdom, after a mother's teaching, that a young man learns is usually learned through pain. But the first effect of great pain is to create a kind of selfish despair, to harden instead of to soften and expand character. Then, perhaps, comes a period of scepticism during which the young man believes in nothing—neither in love, nor in friendship, nor in religion, nor in honesty, nor in truth. More pain is necessary for one in this condition, and if he happen to be of a kind heart, it will certainly come. But new pain, terrible pain, will at last compel sympathy with the suffering of other men, and will force a person to think about all human experience in relation to pain. As human experience of this kind is chiefly recorded by religion, such thinking will force a man to perceive that even if all religions are false in some small matters, they are all true in some very great matters; and then he has learned to respect religion. In like manner he learns to respect humanity, with all its sins and failings, because he understands now how bitter life is, and how bravely mankind have in all times borne the burden of it, and struggled successfully from lower to loftier states of being. Then finally he comes to know, by thinking, that man is limited and weak only in one direction. For the life within him is certainly part of one universal life; he has been through all the past; he is related, though indirectly, to all the present; he will be related, without any question, to all the future. And so in place of the religion that he lost, he wins a larger faith. Instead of the friendship that he lost, he gains a new feeling of friendship and of love for all humanity. Instead of the pleasure he lost, he obtains a new capacity to bear pain, and compre-

hends that only through pain can higher wisdom ever be gained. And finally, just as he has discovered that pain and evil are necessary, so he discovers that many things which at one time seemed to him falsehoods, defections, follies, are of incalculable value, and really form the outer husks, or masks, or visible garments, of invisible truth. This is the principal teaching of the biographical part of the book. But there is very much more in the book than I have been able thus to indicate to you. Every line of it is worth reading not once, but many times; and now we can turn back again to the philosophy of clothes, which is resumed in the third and last portion of the book.

The first chapter of the third part need not concern us in the present lecture, for it is introductory, and something in the nature of a digression. But the next chapter, on church clothes, introduces us to one of Carlyle's most interesting theories. By church clothes, you must not understand Carlyle to mean only the dresses worn by priests and nuns, and so forth; he means all the outward symbolism of a religion as well—its buildings, images, paintings; also its ceremonies, its prayers and music, its incense; also even its traditions, doctrines, dogmas, laws, precepts. For all of these, together or singly, Carlyle does not consider to be Religion itself. Religion itself he thinks rather to be in the heart of man—I am using the word heart here in the sense of mind; and for such religion as this there is no temple large enough, not even the sky, or the whole hollow universe. But what men commonly call religion, the philosopher here calls only the outward signs and symbols of religion, only its garments, its clothes. All clothes must wear out, and be thrown away, to be replaced by new clothes. So all forms and doctrines of religion must change according to time and civilisation, and be replaced by new forms and new doctrines. While garments are new and good and respectable, we must prize them; we do not neglect or show contempt for them until they are worn out and useless.

So again with all outward religion. Necessarily the outward part of religion is not in itself any more true than the outer clothes of a man are truly a part of his own body. But they represent and cover truth. Whenever the outward forms of religion correspond with some inward moral truth, the religion endures. But when the truth is gone, then the clothes can be of no possible use at all. That is the time in which they must be thrown away. There is, however, a danger always in appearances, the danger of mistaking them for truth, or at least of imagining a truth behind them; for we never can see the absolute truth, and can only find its whereabouts through the appearances which cover it.

The same thing is true of the clothing of the military power. The military world, like the religions, has its trappings of splendid colour, its symbols of rank, and its machinery of force. But woe be to those entrusted with the defence of a nation, who mistake these appearances for reality. The forms remain when the body is dead, when the spirit has vanished; and then a people may find themselves suddenly at the mercy of other peoples. For example, just before the great war with Germany, France appeared to be the greatest military power in the world; the appearances, the garments of militarism, were all there; but when the phantom was touched it crumbled down. There is a story by Edgar Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," which tells us about a suit of clothes and a mask walking solemnly through the midst of a ballroom, with nobody inside of them. Such a thing is an army without spirit, moral discipline, or real reserve of power. Such a thing was China, before her military phantom was blown to pieces by Japan. It is interesting to remember here that Carlyle was especially a historian, and his great histories, especially the history of the French Revolution, were all written from the standpoint of this philosophy of clothes. Yet you will find how very closely he touches the truth by

reading the evidence of Taine and others in regard to the conditions of the monarchy before the Revolution became possible. There was the army and all forms of government, but they were all of them shams and masks.

Politics, domestic politics, afford the subject for some other chapters of the book in the same connection. You will perhaps be less interested in these chapters, since they relate especially to foreign conditions, to the state of the rich and poor in England and Ireland. I will only observe that the philosophy of clothes is equally applied to economical machinery, to the exterior facts of domestic government. Finally we have also chapters upon social shams—the conventions of extravagance in dress, extravagance in selfish deeds, extravagance in all kinds of luxury. But these chapters, too, treat particularly of the crying evils of English society, and need only be mentioned. The great value of the whole work is in its treatment of universals; and although truths of the universal class are to be found scattered through every page of the third part of the book, this part is less valuable and less useful to you than the other two books. It is written particularly by way of appeal to English thinkers; the best part of the volume is that of which I have already given a summary.

Now for a few general considerations. I suppose that you have observed from the summary made that "Sartor Resartus" is a book of which the merit is largely in suggestion. It is a book written to make people think, rather than to teach them how to think; and its subject is the most important of all subjects—life, and the conduct of life. It is a book also calculated to correct a certain way of looking at great problems, great riddles, especially social riddles. Now many thousands of thousands of good men get through life very well with only a few simple ideas about right and wrong and duty; and they do not trouble themselves to think about the reason of things. It is indeed better that they should not; for it could only make them unhappy.

But an ever-growing class of educated men can not go through life in this innocent way; they are forced by duty or by other circumstances to think very profoundly, sooner or later, about the mystery of the universe. It is for such as these that the book is useful. It turns the thoughts to the best direction from which many problems can be studied. The statesman entrusted with the welfare of his people, the educator or religious teacher entrusted with the task of alleviating human sorrow or directing human efforts, the poet or man-of-letters whose mission is to teach the beautiful and cultivate the noble emotions or the generous idea—these are the men who can not think about life in the old simple way. All must think about it in a larger fashion, in a fashion in accord with the present great expansion of human knowledge. And these classes of minds are largely furnished by the world's centres of learning; even here, the statesmen and teachers and men-of-letters of the future must come from the universities. I can not help thinking that it is almost the duty of every university student, who feels capable of the feat, to read "Sartor Resartus," not once but many times. There are things in it with which he may not be pleased; there are extravagances in it at which some practical philosophers may smile. But the worth of the reading is in its after-effect; it forces big thoughts, and compels the recognition of new aspects of common things. You might ask me whether works of pure philosophy, scientific philosophy, ought not to have the preference. I should say in answer that this would depend very much upon the mind of the student. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, practical science could not give you one element that you will find in this scientific book—the emotional element. If a man has a very powerful imagination, as well as a very large sympathy, the study of science alone will give him everything that he needs. He can get the water of emotion out of any desert of dry facts. But such men are very rare; it usually happens that the scientific faculties are

fully developed in unemotional minds, so that we find the scientific faculty to be usually associated with a certain hardness of character. This hardness eventually corrects itself to some degree through emotional experience, but it is nearly always there. The literary student would do well, I think, not to take his science without a fair amount of emotional reading, such as may serve to keep the more generous faculties warm.

There is one part of the book that I think ought to interest you more than the philosophy of clothes itself—the part that deals with the author's first painful experiences of life. I have given you a digest of this part. But there is one paragraph which I should wish to especially call your attention to in closing this lecture. It is the paragraph treating of the real obstacles to success in life.

Carlyle's remark is this in substance: "Many people think that success in life, for a man of talent and energy, chiefly depends upon working patiently and steadily, acting honestly in all things, doing one's very best in whatever one undertakes, and always performing one's duty, when duty is required. This means a great deal—it means an almost perfect conduct of life. But a man who believes that this is enough, is under a very great and very sad mistake. Unfortunately the obstacles in life which are really serious, are not to be overcome, either by energy or by one's own work, nor by honesty, nor by duty, nor by faith, nor by anything purely good. For these obstacles are the wickedness and the folly and the ignorance and the envy and the malice of other men." This is the substance of Carlyle's teaching; and I believe that you are all still too young to understand how large and how terrible is the truth that is behind this statement. Everybody with a good heart, who has been brought up in a good home, under the teaching of good parents, and afterwards of good instructors, is apt to enter the world with a high moral sense of duty, and an innocent faith in the goodness of his fellowmen. Of course his

school life teaches him that there are great differences of character, that not all people are equally good. But there is yet no competition in schools of the sort that reveals the full depths, bad and good, of human nature. It is in the struggle of life that this is first fully learned, and the result is a very painful surprise. Instead of thinking that one has only to do one's duty, a young man soon finds himself obliged to think how he can do that duty. Presently he will find that it seems as if all society were in conspiracy against him, trying to prevent him from performing his duty. He learns that to be good in this world is a very difficult thing, a very difficult thing indeed, not because he feels within himself any difficulty about being good, but because other people make the difficulty for him. Almost daily he has to choose between his interests and his morals; almost daily he has to decide whether he will do what is wrong or do what is right; and this goes on for years and years and years, until every fibre of moral strength that is in him has been tested to the uttermost. He has to understand that the real world is but very imperfectly influenced by moral teachings in small matters; that everything is regulated by interest, by advantage. If he be very intelligent and far seeing, he may soon learn to accept things as they are, without enquiring too much why they should be so, and without allowing himself to become angry about them. But no matter how intelligent he may be, he will discover that more than intelligence, and more than energy, and more than morality is necessary for him. He must not try to avoid trouble; he must be a fighter—that is, he must be able to oppose, to overcome, even to give pain when necessary, without caring about the consequences. It is not enough to be good—it is much more important, so far as success goes, to be strong; but the best kind of man is the man who is both good and strong, who knows how to be harsh and stern at certain times. All men can not be all this; very few good men can be all this. Yet success greatly

depends upon it; the higher the society, and the more intellectual the world in which a man's lot is cast, the more bitter and wicked the opposition that must be faced. In this country as yet social conditions have not reached by any means those extremes which they have reached in European societies, where the difficulties of success in life are simply tremendous, and every year increasing; but even here, I think, you will all recognise at some time or other that to be good and to work hard is by no means enough to get along with, and the battle is best won by the man able to meet moral obstacles with superior intelligence and with positive force. Self-respect, the respect that compels a man not to yield to what he believes to be wrong, no matter how great the power behind the wrong—this is the most important of possessions. Yet it does not always obtain its deserts; it must be an aggressive self-respect to get them. I remember a singular case in America where this kind of self-respect was not altogether successful. The man was a civil engineer employed by an immense railway company at a moderate salary. His prospects were bright; the directors liked him, his fortune was almost in sight. One day the chief director of the company ordered him to make plans for a railway construction upon a certain piece of ground. He went to the ground to study it, and came back and said to the director, "We can not use that ground in the way that you want—a space about two feet wide and about three hundred feet long belongs to other people." The director answered, "If we put the building up quickly, it will never be noticed until too late, and then we shall have the law in our favour." "But that would be stealing," the engineer answered, "and I will not do it." For this he was discharged; and the railroad company, being very influential, influenced nearly a dozen other railroad companies against him, so that he could not for more than ten years obtain any employment even in the United States as a railroad engineer. But at last, after long waiting and

suffering, his case was heard of by men who could understand the real business value of such character; and he was placed in a position worthy of his talents.

Nevertheless, he will never be a rich man. He might have been rich, if he had not said no, when several hundred millions of dollars wanted him to say yes. I have no doubt that all of you will find yourselves, not once, but many times in life, asked to say yes, when you feel that you ought to say no. The reading of such a book as "Sartor Resartus" will perhaps at such a time materially help you with the "no." It is the "no" at last that makes the highest quality of human progress, both moral and material.

CHAPTER XVII

ENGLISH FICTION IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The first immense influence of the century in the literature of fiction was certainly Sir Walter Scott. I am sure that you know a good deal about him already. What I have to say about him here will consequently be very short; but it is very important. I need not speak of his novels in detail. What is necessary for you to know is why they have become one of the treasures of English literature; you must be able to understand the reason of their merit. It is not because of style. They have no style to speak of, for Sir Walter was almost as indifferent to finish in his prose as he was in his poetry. Nor is their merit due to the fact that the stories are at all wonderful in themselves as to plot or plan. The whole value of the Waverley novels is in the story-teller's way of telling his story; and I hope you will be patient with me while I try to explain what I mean by his "way." I have already said that it is not style. Scott's power of telling a story differs from that of most other novelists who appeared before or since his time, and the difference lies in his skill to make his characters seem alive. I have only said *seem* alive. They are not always really alive. Shakespeare's characters are really alive; so are some of Jane Austen's. Scott's do not always reach this high degree of creative perfection. You feel that men do not act exactly and speak exactly as Scott makes them act and speak; you feel that some of his people are impossibly good, too heroic, therefore too unnatural. Occasionally you do find really living figures—the proof of great genius; but this is not common. Nevertheless, the figures always at first

have an appearance of life. Scott managed this in quite a peculiar way—by an enormous mastery of detail. When he puts a Highland chief before you, you can see the man, outwardly, exactly as he was; you can study his dress, his port, his action; you can hear his mountain accent; you see all his exterior as vividly as if he were there. This is what makes Scott's creations so wonderful. But inwardly the man of whom I speak, this Highland chief, is not so perfectly made. His accent is quite correct, but his emotions and thoughts are not always quite real. We feel that the real man would have thought and felt somewhat differently under the same circumstances; then we find that we have been looking at a ghost, not a man. With Shakespeare it is altogether otherwise. Shakespeare does not bother himself about the outer man as to details; he gives you the real thought, the real feeling only; then the soul that he made immediately covers itself with warm flesh and becomes alive. But Scott's figures are very often like those Scandinavian goblins which were all hollow behind.

For all that, there is life enough in Scott's personages to make them wonderful; and besides this partial life, there is a real general life in the books, borrowed from the writer's own mind and heart, a generous vivacity, a noble idealism, a fire of purpose, such as no other novelist has given us in historical romance. There are only two books of the whole set in which these qualities do not appear—books written when the man was sick and dying. He achieved something new in the mere fact of making history alive, changing it into romance. I think there is no doubt that he inspired Macaulay to some extent with those new ideas about history-making which have influenced all the great histories of our time. But his great work was in reforming and inspiring fiction and romance. You must not think of him merely as a great figure in *English* literature. He was a European force. He influenced and changed almost every literature of consequence in Europe. He powerfully influenced

French literature, German literature, Italian literature, and Spanish literature. His books have been translated into most languages. And I may venture here to express an opinion that if he has not already influenced Japanese literature, the day will almost certainly come when you will feel his influence all about you. Do not think of Scott as an expired power; he is a living force even to-day, though you must not look to him as a master of style, or anything of that sort. He is only a very great story-teller, one of the greatest story-tellers that the world has ever seen.

You know that Scott lived well into the present century: he died in 1832. The next great figure in this branch of literature was born, unlike Scott, within the century, in 1812. This was Charles Dickens. For many reasons, Dickens must be considered an eccentricity in English literature. Though a very great master of prose, much greater than Scott, he had no education or culture to speak of. He had only the plainest and simplest school training in his boyhood, and had to get out into the world and earn his living, or study how to earn it, long before he became a man. Without going into details, I will only tell you that he began life as a newspaper reporter, doing chiefly shorthand writing in that capacity, which is as severe drudgery as any man of brains could be condemned to. But he was full of youth and health and spirits, and he actually found time between his daily tasks to write down the curious impressions that came to his mind, and to put them into the form of little sketches for publication. I do not think I need tell you anything further about his remarkable and successful life. I will say only that he first became famous through the publication of a little volume of comical sketches, called "The Pickwick Papers," which show the peculiarity of his genius as much as anything that he afterwards wrote. And he wrote, besides stories and sketches, about twenty-five big books. He died only in 1870.

Dickens would be for you a very difficult author to study

as regards the bulk of his work, for it relates chiefly to English city life, particularly the life of London. But you can study him, even without knowing anything about London life, in one or two of his novels, and in some short stories of a very strange kind. Of the novels I should most recommend to you the "Tale of Two Cities," which is a story of the French Revolution; and of the short stories, I should especially recommend a group of railroad sketches, published under the title of "Mugby Junction." I mention these last chiefly because they show in a very strong way the power of Dickens to put ghosts into inanimate objects, to make even railroads and telegraphs become alive.

Dickens had two great faculties. He had the power of giving a factitious animation to objects; and he had the power of seizing and painting certain peculiarities of people, much as certain great painters have. But I must tell you that his greatness is within certain rather narrow limits. There is now, I believe, in Tokyo a French artist who has been making outline drawings of what he sees in the everyday life of the streets. I suppose that you have seen some of them. They are not flattering to Japanese feelings. Some people become very angry on seeing them. Yet it is impossible to say that they are not true. There is truth in them; and yet you feel that they are unjust, sometimes apparently malicious. What is the reason of this? The reason is that this man, who is very clever indeed, observes a certain peculiarity, and slightly exaggerates it so as to produce what we call a caricature. A caricature is the exaggeration of a defect, or a funny peculiarity, or an eccentricity; it is never the exaggeration of anything good. It is thus an art of drawing which is of great use in affecting public opinion during times of political excitement. It is at once true, and yet not true; according to the wish of the artist, it can be made almost wicked. Now the talent or genius of Charles Dickens as a novelist was chiefly the same kind of genius that is possessed by the caricaturist—the faculty for

instantly observing a peculiarity, and exaggerating it picturesquely. Sometimes Dickens gives us sweet and good characters, but even then he always exaggerates something—just as the artist of the "London Punch," when he draws a beautiful girl, never fails to define some characteristic in a somewhat exaggerated way, so as to create a type of character. Most often Dickens' characters are not sweet and good, but simply odd and downright wicked. But they are all wonderful. They are all at once true and not true, just as a caricature is. It is very important to recognise this fact before you begin to study Dickens. What you have to learn from him will be the great literary value of the special faculty to which I referred. For example, one of his characters, Rigaud, has a very long nose and a very peculiar smile; whenever he smiles his nose seems to come down over his moustache, and his moustache seems to go up under his nose. Now this is more than mere play, more than a mere caricature. If you have seen such a smile, and most of us have seen it, then you know that it means evil. The whole man is represented by his smile, and we know a great deal about him long before he shows himself to be thoroughly wicked. Almost every character in Dickens is described by some such peculiarity, bad or good. The method is not altogether untrue to common human nature. In real life we generally remember people by something peculiar in the voice, the walk, the attitude, or the habit of speech. What we think of the peculiarity, is another matter. Dickens showed it always as the caricaturist sees it, not only distinctly but exaggeratedly. And he saw men's hearts somewhat after the same manner. A character did not appear to him the marvellously complex thing that it really is; he distinguished it only by some peculiarity. And this is to say that he saw chiefly the eccentricities of people, and that these eccentricities remain in his mind as the only symbols of their existence. I therefore say that such an art is limited. To come back to the case of the French artist above referred to,

I should make the same observation. He is a very clever artist in a certain direction, but not the noblest direction; and he could not be a great painter. So Dickens was a very great artist in certain directions, but not the highest directions; and we can not call him a great painter of human nature. Rather he was a marvellous caricaturist, a genius in the delineation of peculiarities, and peculiarities mostly of a small kind.

Remember, these observations are but general criticism. As general criticism I believe they are certainly true. But as there are always exceptions to general rules and general statements, so there are pages in Dickens which deserve higher praise than the foregoing remarks would indicate. He is sometimes able to give us sensations of fear of a very strange kind—ghostly fear; and this is always an approach to serious art. At other times he can draw tears, or fill us with a sudden passionate admiration for something noble and good; this is more than an approach to great art—it is great art. In the "Tale of Two Cities" you will find examples of all his powers. But I must say that he does not always rise to such heights; he generally remains at the stage which I have already indicated, the world of caricature. But you must not think that Dickens always wished to caricature. Sometimes he did, as in the "Pickwick Papers"; but generally he did not. He made the caricatures only because he could not help it, because he saw life exactly as a caricaturist sees it, and imagined that he was seeing and feeling like other people, although he was really not able to see or to feel like a common man.

Dickens took for his own subjects generally the middle and the poorer classes of English life, especially London life. The aristocracy and the upper classes were little known to him. But he had two great contemporaries, who formed with him the great triumvirate of nineteenth century novelists. I say "novelists," because, although Walter Scott was so great a writer, his books must be regarded more as ro-

mances than as novels in the true sense. The triumvirate consisted of Dickens, Bulwer Lytton, and Thackeray. Whatever differences of opinion there may be among critics as to the merits of other novelists of the age, I am quite sure that no other writer of real novels can be given a place beside these three. One of them was the greatest of all English novelists except, perhaps, Fielding. We shall speak of him last.

Lord Lytton is, then, the next figure to consider. There were two Lord Lyttons, father and son. Of the son, known in literature as "Owen Meredith," I shall speak in a lecture upon Victorian poets. The father—Edward George Earl Bulwer Lytton—one of the most remarkable of modern novelists, was born in 1803 and died in 1873. He was a Cambridge man, a member of Parliament, a great society gentleman, and had every advantage that rank, wealth, and education could give a man. Such a person ought to have done extraordinary work; and Lord Lytton did extraordinary work.

The whole of his books would represent about thirty volumes in their present form—large volumes—some containing two or more different stories. And when you remember that this great work was done by a man who not only gave much of his time to society, but a great deal of his time also to politics and to diplomacy—for, besides being a member of Parliament, he also held many offices at different times; among others, that of Secretary of State—we can not but wonder at the industry which could accomplish so much, even in the space of forty-five years. But there is a greater wonder than the bulk in this work, always highly finished; there is also the wonder of its versatility. No other great English novelist ever wrote in so many different ways, and upon so many different things. It is hard to believe that all these novels and stories were written by the same person. They can be divided into groups. Each group is marked by a different tone, a different style, almost

as if a different writer had created each group. He began with highly fashionable novels, such as "Falkland" and "Pelham," fashionable novels not only in the fact that they picture aristocratic life, but in the fact that they are written in a peculiar epigrammatic style which reflects faithfully the tone of society of a certain quality. Next he turned to historical romances, and produced quite a number, each upon an entirely different phase of history. "Harold" is the story of the king who died in battle with William the Conqueror. "The Last of the Barons" is a story of Italian life in the fifteenth century. "The Last Days of Pompeii" is, as its name implies, a tale of the first century after Christ. And there are several others upon equally diverse subjects. Another group consists of novels of crime, which at that time were quite popular, perhaps because of the influence of French writers who distinguished themselves in the same direction. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these is "Eugene Aram"; you will remember that the poet Thomas Hood wrote a famous poem about the same schoolmaster who became a murderer. Another group of novels by Bulwer are all novels of middle class domestic life, such as "The Caxtons," and "What Will He Do With It." And yet another group treats of the supernatural, the thaumaturgical, the mystical, the alchemical, the impossible. To this class belongs, I think, the most astonishing work that the author accomplished, and much the most extraordinary that was ever done upon the same subjects by any European writer. Two of these books deal with the subject of an elixir of life,—that is to say, a medicine by the use of which a man could prolong his existence for hundreds of years; and the titles are "Zanoni" and "A Strange Story." But "A Strange Story" is incomparably the greatest book; and the subject includes much more than the elixir of life; it includes almost every weird and terrible imagination of magic and magical power, of alchemy and Rosicrucianism, of mesmerism and double personality. The hero

is a man of society; and the effect of the whole story is made more powerful by the fact that all the scenes are of to-day. The chief figure is a man who has lived for five or six hundred years, but who has been able by secret arts to remain continually young, changing his name every fifty or sixty years, so as to conceal his real personality, speaking all languages, and utilising all sciences, having power of life and death over his fellow-men, and using it for his own interests only, capable of enormous crime without remorse, and feeling no sympathy with the humanity to which he has made himself strangely superior. No more terrible story ever was written; and it is written with an art that makes it appear not only possible but actual. In order to have written it, enormous reading was necessary, as well as enormous talent. There is scarcely any remarkable superstition of the middle ages, of the Orient, or of ancient Scandinavia, which has not been utilised in the preparation of the book. Many readers, even highly educated men, were taught by this book to feel an interest in matters that they had never heard of before, such as the *Scin-Laeca*, or luminous ghost, of old northern fancy. Yet it is not so much in the actual learning which the story displays, as in the marvellous combinations of that learning, that the writer's art is displayed. You ought, all of you, to read this particular story, even if you read no other book of Bulwer's; for to read it is like an education in the supernatural. I shall mention only one other title of this last group, "The Coming Race." This little book is known in Japan, and I need not tell you much about it. But I want to say that at the time it was written, many of the electric and magnetic discoveries imagined in the story, had not yet been made. They have been made since, and the book was like a prophecy of scientific discovery. Take for instance the art of electric lighting, and compare the resulting facts with the description of the Vril lights in "The Coming Race." Bulwer was not a shallow thinker; and it is not rash to assume that some others of his

imaginations may be realised in a future day. An application of electricity to war purposes, as indicated in "The Coming Race," would, if realised, be the end of all war in this world, and perhaps that would be a very good thing for mankind.

But I am not yet done with the subject of the supernatural as treated by Bulwer. One of his short stories is generally acknowledged to be the greatest ghost story that was ever written, and perhaps it is an even more wonderful thing than "A Strange Story." I mean the little story called first "The House and the Brains," but afterwards called "The Haunted and the Haunters." By this little story Bulwer is attached for all time to the highest literature, as it has become a classic.

There is another story, a very short story, by Bulwer, which has a most interesting history; for it may be said to have indirectly influenced the literature of half the English world. First I will mention my own experience of the story. I read it when a boy in some magazine; there was no name attached to it, and I supposed that it had been written by Edgar Poe. For many years this mistake continued in my mind; unfortunately it had been confirmed by the opinion of a man wiser than I, who had said to me that "Monos and Daimonos" was certainly written by Edgar Poe. It has indeed all of Poe's peculiarities, every one of them. But as a matter of fact it was written by Bulwer, and may be found in his volume entitled "Conversations with an Ambitious Student"—in most editions I think you will find this bound up with "The Pilgrims of the Rhine." Now Poe read the story while very young, and it changed his whole life. All his prose work afterwards was written in imitation of it or under its influence. The influence of Poe in turn affected nearly all English poetry and a great deal of English prose—besides influencing also French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Russian literature. Thus you can see how much even one little story may accomplish. In

Bulwer's case it indirectly toned all European literature. If for no other reason you should read it; it is a little story about a ghost and an evil conscience. What I have told you about it can not, however, give you the least idea of how extraordinary it is.

It is now time to talk about Bulwer's style. The ornamental and rhetorical style, the highly coloured and musical style, in short the romantic style, reached its highest in him. No man before or since wrote in just the same splendid way. After him the tendency became simple again. At one time Bulwer's English was studied in thousands of colleges as a model style; it was used in elocution clubs; it was recited at all literary entertainments. Now there is feeling against it. It is called extravagant, theatrical, melodramatic, and many other bad names. But this is unjust, and I think it is owing chiefly to the bad taste of our time. I will say that Bulwer's English is very beautiful, often very wonderful, and that if his books are not now read so much as they used to be, it is only because they have other defects than defects of style. Bulwer's characters are not living characters in the true sense. They are not even living characters in the sense that many of Scott's characters are. But it is otherwise when Bulwer writes about the supernatural, the ghostly, the impossible; then his work becomes as living or real as any work of the kind can be, and it is for that reason that I expressly advise you to read the supernatural books. But even in the other books, the style is always very remarkable, and it is an education to read such pages as those describing the eruption of the volcano in "The Last Days of Pompeii," or the descriptions of Rome and Roman life in "Rienzi," or the description of Venice in "Zanoni." Do not believe critics who tell you that Bulwer's style is not worth study. It is style of a particular class, indeed; but it is the best of that class in the whole of English novel writing. As for his rank merely as a novelist, I should say that he wrote too much, and that

he never reached the highest rank except in his short stories and in his astonishing "Strange Story."

Contemporary with him lived and worked the greatest of all English novelists, the very giant of the art of novel writing, Thackeray. Giant in power, not in bulk of work; for he wrote less than half of what Bulwer wrote,—only seven or eight novels. But these novels are incomparably greater than those of Dickens or Bulwer or even Scott, and are approached by no work of the century except that of Jane Austen. Thackeray was not born in England but in India—at Calcutta, in the year 1811. It is a curious thing that the greatest English novelist of the nineteenth century was born at Calcutta; and that the greatest English song-writer and story-teller of the present day was born at Bombay, somewhat more than half a century later. I think it is probable that in the twentieth century it will be acknowledged that the two greatest English men of letters of our own age were both born in India. Another queer fact is that both have much the same quality of dramatic art, that they see life in the same vivid way, and that they both excel in a kind of satirical poetry, half pathetic and half mocking, but always of a unique and unparalleled kind. Thackeray was educated in England, and studied at Cambridge. He came of a very good family, and could have taken a high place in London society, but he was poor, and wrote only to live. His first ambition was to be a comic artist, a caricaturist, and he was certainly clever in this kind of drawing. But he was not clever enough to win a high position and to make a good salary at this sort of work; therefore he suddenly changed his plans, and took to writing. At first he tried to write comical or satirical things chiefly, in verse and prose, for "Punch" and other papers. But gradually he worked into serious writing, and his first great novel, "Vanity Fair"—with a title suggested by Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress"—startled the literary world. But it was really too great to become at once popular. Men

were then more interested in the brilliant romantic novels of Bulwer, and the eccentric novels of Dickens. Thackeray had to compete against these, and only a giant could have done it. Again and again he put forth astonishing studies of life—"Henry Esmond," "The Virginians," "Pendennis," "The Newcomes." At first he had to do journalistic work for "Punch" and other periodicals, while his reputation was being made; and it was made slowly, because a very great talent can not be understood quickly by the public. But the reputation came, and Thackeray was acknowledged, even before his death, as the greatest man of letters. He did not write very much. No man could write very much and do such astonishing work, because work of this class costs too much to the nervous system. I shall speak of this again in a moment; I first want to remark upon Thackeray's versatility. Observe that his great novels are not all of one class. Like Bulwer he could write historical romance, though he did not attempt to go very far into history. "Esmond," "The Virginians," these are historical romances; but they are also in the truest and highest sense novels—treating of realities, and nothing but realities. "Vanity Fair," "Pendennis," "The Newcomes,"—these are novels of society, high society, novels of the gentry, in which the figures mostly belong to the very finest classes, the nobility, the clergy, the military aristocracy. Yet Thackeray could depict, when he wished to, any class of society, and he sometimes amused himself by literary caricatures of the peculiarities of the lowest ranks, especially the peculiarities of the English servant. Such studies you will find in his "Yellowplush Papers." But you must not think that Thackeray caricatured only the poor and spared the rich. Quite the contrary. No man has satirized more terribly what we may call the "genteel vulgarity" of the English upper classes, that vulgarity of selfishness and conceit that may even make a lord at times less of a gentleman than his servant. In "The Book of Snobs" Thackeray treated such vulgarity as

it never had been treated before, and in all his novels he never spares the faults of men in high places. Besides this work Thackeray did many light things, comic poetry, sketches of travel, lectures upon historical and literary subjects. There is very little of his poetry; but what there is may be classed with the very best kind of that "society-verse" about which I shall give you a lecture. It is full of kind mischief and half-suppressed tenderness, a delightful mixture of the cynical with the emotional. This same delicate double tone qualifies a great deal of his literary work, even his travel sketches. There are two bits of verse by him of which you ought to remember the names. One is "The Sorrows of Werther"—this is perhaps a little cruel—and "The Ballad of Bouillabaisse," which is a masterpiece of mixed humour and pathos. Besides, I may mention some purely comic verses, half satirical, painting certain types of character. Such are the "Ballads of Policeman X." In England you must know that the police are numbered in divisions, each divison having for sign a letter of the alphabet; thus, if you see on a policeman's uniform the letters A132, or B200, that means that the man is ranked as No. 132 in division A., or No. 200 in division B. English police are largely drawn from the country classes, men of great strength and honesty being required, and they have some peculiarities of character and manner which Thackeray amused himself by celebrating in verse. But outside of his novels, his most remarkable literary work consists of lectures. No other lectures can well be compared with those except the lectures of Froude, and Thackeray is even superior to Froude. There are two volumes of lectures, one upon the literary men of the eighteenth century, and one upon four English kings, the "Four Georges." These are very wonderful, and anybody who reads the "Four Georges" must regret that Thackeray never had the time or the inclination to write a history of England. He died comparatively young, leaving a novel unfinished.

What distinguishes Thackeray's work from all other novel writing of the century, except Miss Austen's, is the same quality that distinguishes Shakespeare's characters in English drama. They are really alive, and to make a character really alive is the greatest feat of which human genius is capable. But, as I told you before, it costs. In order to make your characters live, you must actually put so much of your own life into them; they can live only at your expense. The man who has a perfect imagination must exhaust his nervous system very quickly through the exercise of his prodigious faculty. How this happens I can not very well explain to you without going into a study of physiology, which would take too much time. But the fact is scientifically recognised and explained; and it is because of this fact that Thackeray has given us only seven or eight novels, while other men were writing twenty-five or thirty. Perfection is too expensive to the life of the man that is capable of it. Even Shakespeare, you will remember, died at a comparatively early age.

CHAPTER XVIII

ENGLISH FICTION IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

I THINK we may begin the study of English fiction since 1850 with the name of a woman. It is curious that the first great period of nineteenth century fiction also begins with the name of a woman; for if Sir Walter Scott was the father of the modern romance, Miss Edgeworth was just as certainly the mother of the modern domestic novel, and the writing of novels of this class is a work depending much upon that delicacy of observation which women possess in a much higher degree than men. The same fact, I am told, is observed in the history of Japanese literature, though on this subject I am not qualified to speak. Nevertheless I imagine myself tolerably close to the truth when I say that a considerable portion of the best Japanese literature is the work of women.

The woman who began the second period of the nineteenth century novel writing was Charlotte Brontë. Miss Brontë was one of three sisters, all of whom possessed considerable literary ability. They were the daughters of an Irish clergyman, Patrick Brontë (or Brunty), who settled in Haworth. The Rev. Mr. Brontë was a passionate, ill-tempered man, and seems to have caused his daughters considerable unhappiness, and unhappiness which perhaps shows itself, like a fugitive gloom, through many pages of the work of the sisters. The living, as the curacy of such a clergyman is called in England, was very small; and poverty added to the bitterness of the girls' lives. They had no prospects; the position of a daughter of a poor clergyman is apt to be very unenviable. She is delicately edu-

cated and is therefore unfitted to marry into the artisan class, while, unless possessing remarkable beauty or other advantages, she has very little chance of marrying into a higher class. In a large number of cases she is therefore doomed to remain unmarried, and is usually obliged, notwithstanding, to make her own living. Therefore she is trained for a governess—that is to say, a female teacher in a private family. The three Brontë sisters were so trained, and Charlotte was sent to Belgium for a special course. There was a brother, but he appears to have been a good-for-nothing, lazy fellow, who never gave his sisters any help, and who probably lived at their expense, which is considered a very shameful thing to do. Charlotte Brontë and Anne Brontë and Emily Brontë first attempted poetry. Their poems did not succeed, but some critics observed in them remarkable qualities. Emily wrote under the name of Ellis Bell, Anne wrote under the name of Acton Bell, and Charlotte under the name of Currer Bell,—each thus choosing a literary name beginning with the same letter as the real name. Charlotte Brontë next appeared in print singly, under the name of Currer Bell, with a novel called "The Professor." This was followed by a novel called "Jane Eyre," which startled England into the recognition of a new and very powerful literary personality. Nothing like "Jane Eyre" had yet appeared in literature. There was nothing romantic about it. It was not the story of a beautiful woman and a handsome man, such as other popular novelists had written, but the story of two very plain, very obstinate and very deep natures, alternately attracting and repelling each other, fearing to show love and withdrawing violently when it was shown, yet at last irresistibly drawn together in spite of this long struggle between pride and affection. It was a story of everyday humanity, and it appealed to a very large class. Its success was immense and well deserved. It provoked a great number of weaker writers to imitate it, and within a few years there were brought out, both

in England and America, a great number of flimsy novels with ugly women for heroines, and ugly obstinate men for heroes. After "Jane Eyre," Charlotte Brontë produced two other novels, "Villette," and "Shirley." The heroine of the latter is said to be a study of the character of one of her own sisters. Both are very good, but I think that "Villette" is the better,—indeed I have often been tempted to think that it is even better than "Jane Eyre," but perhaps the reason why I think so is that I have been in the same class of French school as those described in "Villette," and the verisimilitude of the narrative therefore appeals to me in a particular way. One feels in reading any of this author's books that one is reading not a story, but warm, living, cruel pages out of a life. What Charlotte Brontë did was simply to put into book form her own experiences of love, despair, and struggle, but this with the very highest art of the novel writer, with a skill of grouping incident and of communicating vividness to the least detail, rarely found in English fiction. The work of her sister Emily in prose, "Wuthering Heights," is gloomy and strong, weaker than her own, but showing much of the same originality. Anne, the other sister, produced two novels, "Agnes Gray," and "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall." They are not very remarkable. Charlotte alone is likely to remain a very great figure in English fiction, and only last year the taste for her work revived, with the result that a beautiful new edition of her novels was brought out in London. Some sneers have been made at the poetry of the sisters, chiefly because these poems were somewhat pantheistic in spirit, but I am inclined to think that the sneers were foolish. At all events the intense admiration expressed by John Addington Symonds for these poems served to awaken new interest later, and they have been reprinted. Symonds himself was not a very great poet, but he was a critic of excellent judgment and of no little weight.

Many other women figured in the roll of honour of Eng-

lish fiction since 1850, and Charlotte Brontë was not the greatest. Still greater was a woman born two years later, and now universally known to the English speaking world as George Eliot. Her real name was Mary Ann Evans. She was born in 1819, the daughter of a steward in charge of an English estate at Arbury in Warwickshire. An English steward does not rank very high socially, and can be said to belong at best to the lower middle class; but he has to be a man of considerable intelligence as well as integrity, and he can usually command a very good salary. Mary Ann was not merely well educated by her father, but extremely well educated, some would say over-educated. She studied in Switzerland, followed the university courses so far as was possible at that time, and must be thought of altogether as a university woman. She was certainly an intellectual force rather masculine than feminine in her massiveness.

Her first literary work was a series of sketches of provincial life as seen in the neighbourhood of a country parsonage, and entitled "Scenes from Clerical Life." These stories appeared in "Blackwood's Magazine," and at once gave her a considerable reputation. Nevertheless she allowed quite a considerable interval to pass before again appearing in print. She went to London, began to write serious articles for the "Westminster Review," and shortly became one of its editors. The "Westminster Review" was one of the ablest reviews of the time, but it was a thorn in the side of the godly, for it was anything but orthodox. Church prejudice abhorred even the name of it. It was mainly scientific and philosophical, with a fine flavour of pure literature noticeable in its criticisms. Darwinism had not then forced itself upon the conviction of the century, and the liberality of opinions expressed by "Westminster" was considered somewhat scandalous. Herbert Spencer was then a frequent contributor to the "Westminster." He made the acquaintance of Miss Evans, and learning to estimate her as an extraordinary woman, introduced her to his friend the philosopher

and critic, George Henry Lewes. The acquaintance thus resulting turned out somewhat differently perhaps from Mr. Spencer's expectations. The two fell in love with one another, but there was an obstacle to their marriage in the fact that Mr. Lewes already had a wife. Mrs. Lewes was insane; but the law of England did not allow a divorce under such circumstances. Both Miss Evans and Mr. Lewes were philosophers, and deciding the question after their own fashion, they formed a union which, although illegal, was ultimately recognised to a certain extent by English society,—a strange example of the fact that genius is able to obtain even in England, the most prejudiced of countries, forgiveness for what is never forgiven to the ordinary class of people.

This union certainly had a very great influence upon the literary career of Miss Evans. Lewes was a good critic, though an unsuccessful story teller. He was also a thinker, and one of the foremost scientific writers of the time. He was not of the dry class of learned men, but could write on the deepest subjects in the most romantic manner. He had the art-sense of the wonderful race to which he belonged, for he was a Jew, and therefore could appreciate all the qualities of the fine mind of his companion. Only by a very little did Lewes miss rising to the first rank in the scientific world. He was unfortunately a Comtist, and had been perhaps a little too hasty in yielding to the new thought of a new time. Most of the English writers who followed Comte made failures,—failures that chiefly show themselves in want of synthesis, in the lack of capacity to carry out a work upon intended lines. Buckle and Lewes alike show this weakness. Both began work upon a scale disproportionate to their powers, and both found it impossible to finish. While Lewes's history of philosophy will always be found one of the most delightful books of its class, his great psychological work, "Problems of Life and Mind," is quite as much a failure as was Buckle's "History of Civilisation." Both are full of

good and grave things, but both show the lack of that wonderful synthesising power which marks the superiority of minds like those of Spencer and of Huxley.

From these remarks upon Lewes, it is easy to see that the mind of his companion was likely to receive influence both for good and bad. And such influences her most admiring critics have found traces of in her work. Her early novels, resembling in their simple strength and sunny humour the "Scenes from Clerical Life," differ so much from her later productions that it is almost impossible to understand how they could have been written by the same person. By earlier novels I mean "Adam Bede," published 1858, the "Mill on the Floss," published 1860, and "Silas Marner," published 1861, under the name of George Eliot—the author, like a very famous French woman who wrote in very much the same style, finding it advantageous to adopt a masculine *nom-de-plume*. Whether Miss Evans had the example of George Sand before her when she chose the literary name of George Eliot, I am not prepared to say; but I think that any reader of the works of these two women will find in the earlier work of George Eliot much of the charm that distinguishes the work of George Sand.

These were stories of simple characters and of simple life. In the meantime Miss Evans had been for many years preparing a novel of a totally different description, which appeared first in 1863. She said afterwards that she was a young girl when she began the book, and an old woman when she had finished it. In order to write it she had been obliged to read studiously more than five hundred different works in English, German, French, and Italian,—especially in Italian, because it was a story of the Italian Renaissance. The book is called "Romola," after the name of the principal female character in the narrative. The hero, or at least the chief male character, Tito, is one of those Greeks who, after the ruin of the Eastern Empire, became teachers in Italy of the arts and sciences, and helped the revival of learning. The

great strength of the book is the study of Tito's character. It is a character extremely complex, extremely charming, and extremely detestable at the same time. It is a character to some degree void of moral conscience, void of moral honour, void of gratitude. Tito betrays his benefactor, not for gain, but through mere indolent lazy selfishness. He betrays his wife; he betrays his friends and his party; and he is at last killed by the hands of the very man who had once adopted him as a son. In short, Tito represents as faithfully as a great artist can paint it, one of the types of the Renaissance man,—neither the best nor the worst, but a type which must have been common enough. As a foil to it we have a drawing of the character of Savonarola, perhaps less successful. That which makes the book most agreeable reading, in my opinion, is the æsthetic study of the Renaissance which illustrates and beautifies every page; the descriptions of gems, bronzes, marbles, manuscripts; the colourful studies of costume and decoration; the rare but exquisite paintings of womanly sweetness and grace and statuesque loveliness. At all events I think it may be said that this book stands alone in English literature and perhaps in the world's literature, as a picture of the romantic epoch. Critics are very much divided in opinion about it. I must tell you that the majority of them have called it a failure, and when I say that it is to me the greatest of all George Eliot's books, I am speaking against the majority. Before turning to other works by the same author, I should like to direct the attention of the student to what seems to me one of the most particularly effective passages in the book, touched by a feeling not to be found in any other work of George Eliot,—the feeling of the weird. I mean the dream of Romola, that marvellous dream of the river whose waters are not waters but an unrolling of ancient parchments, and of the marriage at which the face of the priest became the face of Death. Whoever can read that and deny to George Eliot the qualities of poetic imagination, seems to me a poor

critic. "Romola" can not be said to suggest to the world the influence of Lewes upon George Eliot. That influence does not appear even in a subsequent volume, "Felix Holt," published in 1866, a strong, simple story which seems to return to the writer's first manner. But in the great novel "Middlemarch," which belongs to the class of learned novels, the influence may be said to show itself. It appears especially in the psychological studies which give the volume quite a special character. It is beyond question a very great book, but a painful book, because of the painful truths of the conditions therein portrayed—the marriage of the girl through an ideal of duty to a man totally selfish and unworthy, with the inevitable disillusionment that such a step must bring to any fine mind.

In the next novel, published in 1876, there is no room to mistake the influence of Lewes. Daniel Deronda, the character who gives his name to the novel, is a Jew,—some have said an ideal study of Lewes himself, though that may be going too far. But all that part of the story treating of Jewish life, Jewish learning, Jewish religion, Jewish history, has obviously been written under urging and for a purpose not at all in harmony, I would not say with George Eliot's feelings, but with her natural literary tendency, and it is just this part of the book that the public pronounced a failure. It vexed her admirers and lost to her a great deal of the popularity that she had previously enjoyed. Nevertheless, I think the main part of the book contains some of the most splendid work ever done by any novelist. The character of the girl who marries a wealthy man whom she can not love, in order to assist her parents; the character of the man, hard and cold as stone, the struggle between the two natures, in the cruel existence which the reader can not help sharing, and the multitudinous moral questions that the narration suggests but leaves unanswered,—these would do honour to any of the great novelists of modern times, even the French masters not excepted.

There is not much to be said about the rest of George Eliot's work. After the death of Mr. Lewes she married a Mr. John Cross. Her later work was of very little importance. "Theophrastus Such," a volume of dissertations, psychological and philosophical, only suggest that the impulses received from Mr. Lewes toward the study of philosophy had at last entirely dominated her, and perhaps paralysed her creative power. But I am not sure that this suggestion would be altogether correct. She had become an old woman, and at her age fresh novel writing was almost out of the question. I should mention also that she published several volumes of poetry, since collected into one. The longest poem in the collection is the "Legend of Jubal," —in Bible story the first musician. Most critics deny poetical value to George Eliot's verses. They are sweet, melodious, pleasing; here and there one finds in them pretty little songs; but they are not great, or deep, or particularly wonderful in any way. Still, remembering the charm which they gave me at the time that I first read them, I can not help believing that they would never have been so severely judged if they had been written by a less important person. In her greatest work this woman was so very great, greater than even any man of our time in the same field, that the world expected from her only gigantic things, and she could not always come up to its expectations.

After George Eliot's date, the next great name that interests us is that of Charles Kingsley, who figures especially about 1850. Charles Kingsley was the son of a clergyman, became a clergyman himself, and remained one all his life. But perhaps no other name in English literature so little represents those conservative influences which we are accustomed to associate with the Church. We see a very great deal of the man, and of the soul of the man, but of the clergyman we see very little; of the Christian nothing sectarian, nothing narrow-minded, only a great broad, deep,

and true religious sense, toned by idealism, but never qualified by humbug.

Kingsley was born in 1819, educated first at King's College at London, and afterwards at Cambridge. His native place was Devonshire, and in many of his stories we find charming pictures of the Devonshire coast. After entering the Church he was appointed to the rectorship of Eversley in Hampshire, where he always lived. Perhaps because of his great literary powers he was made Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in the latter part of his life. He was the brother-in-law of the great historian Froude, and what has been said of Froude, as Professor of History, has also been said of Kingsley in the same capacity. Indeed the men resembled each other in many respects, both of weakness and of strength. The faults found with the lectures of both was that they were too romantic, that they delighted the students by appealing to their imagination with vivid and emotional pictures, but at the same time gave them one-sided views of history. Romantic Kingsley's lectures certainly were, but in the most artistic sense; and it is certain that those who heard them with open minds obtained such glimpses of historic truth, and received such impulses of patriotic pride and heroism, as no merely pedantic work ever could have given.

His books represent much variety. We have pure scientific studies in natural history and geology; we have fairy tales; and we have a number of novels, both historical and romantic. The novels themselves can not be classified under one general head nor even under three. For example, "Alton Locke" is a romance of the Chartist period in England, and largely expresses personal feeling; "Hypatia" is a story of the fifth century, and the scene is Alexandria in Egypt; "Westward Ho!" is a narrative of the great naval struggle between Spain and England in the sixteenth century; "Hereward the Wake" is a romance of the time of the Norman

conquest; "Yeast" embodies the theory of what was called in Kingsley's time "Christian Socialism," and "Two Years Ago" is perhaps the only novel of the lot in the strictest sense of the word—a novel of modern English life.

Perhaps because of the relation of the narratives to particular agitations of English social life, "Alton Locke" and "Yeast" are not well adapted for reading by students in Japan. I should not dare to recommend them; and yet I can not but regret that they are not likely to appeal to you in the same way they once appealed to English readers. I do not know any pages in all Kingsley's work more politically impressive than those in which the dream of Alton Locke is described, the dream of the great migration of races from India westward, as it was imagined in the period when the new Sanskrit studies had first taught us that the English and the Hindoo were brothers in blood and kindred in speech. You will not easily forget the splendid phantasmagoria in this description—the vastness—the movement, the idea given of great space and great light, and the divisions always lessening behind the Himalayas, like a rosy dawn. More useful for your literary study, however, are almost any of his other books. Most critics say that "Westward Ho!" is his masterpiece, but I can not help believing that English patriotic feeling inspires this judgment. "Westward Ho!" is a great book with its studies of West Indian life, its drawings of the English gentlemen's adventures of Elizabeth's time, its battle scenes, its heroism, and the awful but not impossible catastrophe at the end, when Amyas Leigh is blinded by a lightning flash; but somehow or other I can not help thinking that to persons not English this story is less interesting than "Hypatia," or even than "Hereward," the most really English of all. I should say to the student, "Read 'Hereward' and 'Hypatia,' before you read any other work by Kingsley." Hereward is the old English Viking,—brother in blood and speech to the Scandinavian Berserk,—the man who took off instead of putting

on his armour to fight. There was really a Hereward in history, who long resisted the power of William the Conqueror and who was called the Wake, or the Awake, because he could never be taken by surprise. Kingsley has nobly idealised this figure; he has made Hereward not merely the typical man of the North, but a model of strong and generous manhood for all time. He once and only once does wrong—he is faithless to his wife because of the fascination and the charm of another woman, and this fault brings about his ruin and death, though not before he has made, as a man should make, proper moral atonement. So much for the merely ethical side of the story. But study the artistic side! It is simply beyond praise. And here you can feel that the historian is behind the novelist. Only one who has read and studied northern literature and northern history very deeply could have made such pictures for us. As we read, we do not doubt that we really can hear the cry of the sea-kings, and the sound of the oar roll "like thunder working up from the Northeast."

I do not think that Kingsley loved the old North, the Scandinavian North, merely because he was an Englishman, but because the old North seemed to him ever the highest type of ideal manhood, combined strength of body and soul. No one, not perhaps even Mr. Swinburne, felt the beautiful side of Greek life more than Kingsley; you might be sure of that after reading the matchless volume of Greek fairy tales which he wrote for his own children, drawing the little pictures with his own hand. But he loved the North more than Greece; he loved its heroes, its scorn of death, its tremendous and ferocious energy. Therefore he introduces it to us under circumstances and in contrasts which manifest these qualities in quite a special way. "Hypatia," you know, is the story of one of the most horrible episodes of the history of the early Christian Church. Hypatia was the last of the pagan, that is to say Greek, priestesses of note; she was also the last representative of the pagan philosophers. She was a

virgin and very beautiful, and her beauty and learning had made her famous. In the universities of Alexandria she taught the philosophy of Plato in its later form, the form known as Neo-Platonism. The savage fanatics of that time regarded her as their enemy, and as the enemy of Christianity. As she went one day to lecture, they seized her, stripped her naked, scraped all the flesh off her bones with sharp shells, and burned the miserable remains. With the death of Hypatia died Greek learning in Alexandria, and fanaticism and superstition obtained supremacy by the brutal murder.

Now this was a strange subject for Kingsley to make a novel of,—I say strange, because it was so painful, so horrible a fact. But he treated it like a great artist, and he seemed to have chosen it because of the opportunity which it afforded him of introducing a Scandinavian study, or something very like it. As you know, the men of the North, under the various names of Goths or Vandals, descended upon the Roman provinces of northern Africa at an early day. Kingsley represents a small party of these terrible men entering the city of Alexandria and doing whatever they pleased by mere force of character. They avenged Hypatia. They killed four or five thousand monks just as a mere sacrifice to the soul of their chief. The contrast between the corrupted life of Alexandria and the life of these men, the study of the enervating effect of climate, luxury, and vice upon their moral character, and the magnificent sketch of the method by which they redeemed themselves triumphantly under the leadership of old Wulf,—these are the very noblest parts of the book. There are chapters which could not but appeal to the Japanese, imbued with the old Samurai spirit, which was not after all so very different from the northern spirit Kingsley describes, as you might suppose. In "Two Years Ago"—which is quite a modern English novel—we are introduced to another form of Kingsley's idealism, generally known as "muscular Christianity." At all events, it is in

"Two Years Ago" that this idea is best expressed. And what is muscular Christianity? The shortest way of explaining is by stating Kingsley's strictly personal views of religion. Although a clergyman of the English Church, and in so far perfectly orthodox, Kingsley held that true religion did not consist in faith but in works,—that it was not religion merely to kneel and pray in time of trouble, or to submit to every difficulty, with the idea that the will of God makes human misfortunes. He taught that it was the duty of a man to meet and to conquer obstacles; to strive with all his might, strength of body and soul, honestly for success; to cultivate his muscles as well as his mind, to enjoy the beautiful world as much as possible without being wickedly selfish or mean or scheming. And Kingsley's readers saw in this new gospel a sort of union of the northern spirit with Christianity; they smiled at it and called it muscular Christianity. But it was good, sound teaching, no more peculiar to Christianity than to any other faith, no more English than Japanese, but simply the exposition of what religion ought to be for a gentleman of any country or any faith. "Two Years Ago" is the picture of Kingsley's ideal of an English gentleman and English university man, fighting his way through the world to success by following a few simple, noble, gentlemanly principles.

Besides the novels, Kingsley wrote a number of books for young people on scientific and other subjects, such as "Town Geology" and "Glaucus." These might have been more successful than they were, had not Kingsley happened to live in the time of Professor Huxley. Although Kingsley's books were very good in their way, Huxley's manuals for students, written in a simple form never attempted before, took away the public attention from the juvenile scientific books of Kingsley. More noteworthy are his beautiful fairy tales, "The Heroes" and the "Water Babies." As for "The Heroes," it is beyond any question the best book of Greek stories written for children in any language. Kingsley has

had hundreds of imitators, but none who ever approached him.

If I seem to be giving a great deal of space to Kingsley, it is because he was really one of the very greatest figures in nineteenth century literature, with talent of immense range. Above all, his attractiveness seems to be due to his power of exciting the emotion of heroism, of manliness, of self-confidence, of common expression,—and this by prose beyond the power of anybody but a very great poet to equal. Kingsley could also be a poet in verse. Several critics have agreed that his "Andromeda" is written in the very best hexameters in the whole range of English verse, Mr. Swinburne, I believe, alone dissenting from this rather generous praise. But in any case the verse of "Andromeda" is confessedly grand. Kingsley wrote very little poetry, but he had more success with what he did write than perhaps any of our latest poets of the century. His two songs "The Three Fishers" and the "Sands of Dee" have been translated into every European tongue, as well as into various tongues not European. Some years ago it was announced by an English traveller that the Arab women were singing the "Sands of Dee."

For pure literature, I doubt whether there are two other names in the period we are considering really comparable with that of Charles Kingsley. If there are, one of them would certainly be Kingsley's brother Henry, who was born considerably later, in 1830. He showed at an early time evidence of the same peculiar faculty of writing poetically effective prose that distinguished his brother. Unlike his brother, unfortunately, he was troubled about the question of a livelihood. He was educated at Oxford, but after graduating went to Australia in the hope of making his fortune, like many other English younger sons. He remained in Australia five years, but was not successful, and returning to England was obliged to write for a living. He produced three novels—"Geoffrey Hamlyn," "The Hillyars and the

Burtons," and "Ravenshoe"—the first being an Australian romance. All are good; but the last is supremely good,—so good that some critics have placed it above anything done by his brother. This is questionable. But "Ravenshoe" is certainly one of the finest novels of the century. The character of the English cavalry officer, Hornby, is noble, and the splendid story of his death in the Balaclava Charge is one of the best battle narratives in any language. I would recommend only this novel to you as a sample of the younger Kingsley's power. Afterwards he wrote several minor novels, including a book called "Hetty," which is pleasing. But Henry Kingsley was unfortunate in his circumstances; the necessity of writing for a living prevented him from showing all the skill of which he was capable.

A special era in novel writing is marked by the name of Anthony Trollope, born 1815. He was the younger son of a barrister, and was educated at Oxford. He belonged to a literary family. His mother was the same Mrs. Trollope who in 1832 wrote a book entitled "Domestic Manners of the Americans." There were three English writers who made Americans extremely angry—Captain Basil Hall (grandfather of Professor Chamberlain of Tokyo), Mrs. Trollope, and Charles Dickens. All three visited America at a time when the social conditions were really very bad, and they wrote truthfully, though perhaps sarcastically, about what they saw. But of these three Mrs. Trollope was the most unmerciful critic, and the Americans have not been able to forget her even to this day. Still her book shows great talent, and that talent she transmitted to her children. The eldest, Thomas Adolphus Trollope, was a writer on Italian history, and also a novelist, but not of the first rank. The younger, Anthony, achieved a prodigious success.

This prodigious success was simply the success of a story teller. Trollope wrote novels dealing with the life of the great English middle classes, ranging principally from the upper rank of middle classes into lower rank of the nobility

and gentry. He happened to strike a field that had never been adequately cultivated by any predecessor, and which gave him an enormous audience. But be careful not to compare novelists of this type with Kingsley or with women like Brontë or Evans. There is an immense distinction. The work of Trollope and of Trollope's imitators is not fine literature in the best sense of the word; it is only very clever story telling, without much study of form. There are several curious things to be said about Trollope's work. In the first place he wrote so many novels that one of his recent critics, Mr. Saintsbury, confesses that he does not know how many novels Trollope wrote. Another curious thing is that Trollope did all this work while he was a clerk in the post office, a fact showing tremendous application. And a third queer thing about the work is that not a little of it was done while travelling; for Trollope kept writing always and everywhere, in steamboats, upon railroads, and in cabs. The value of his work is not, as I have already said, purely literary. It is a faithful reflection of the manners, customs, thoughts, and feelings of the English middle classes. As a student of many types of the English nature, Trollope was very successful. It is said that he was the only man that could take his readers into a bishop's bedroom and make them hear all that the bishop was saying to his wife. He had an extraordinary imagination, but an imagination developed entirely in one direction, in that of character types. His position in the English civil service and his relations with that part of society to which his family belonged, were such as enabled him really to know his subjects. Studying characters by groups or types, he could use them as puppets, could arrange them like men on a chess board, and make them do whatever he pleased. Given a certain knowledge of the main lines of character, Trollope could say, "Under such and such circumstances, that man will do this; under other circumstances he would do that." And he was very seldom wrong. The great

English reading world, at all events, thought him right, and made him rich, but he remained in the Civil Service until his death. Of the immense multitude of books which he wrote I should advise you to read only one, as a specimen, because Trollope is only of second or third rate value to the student of literature. But I will give you the titles of what are commonly considered his best works,—"Barchester Towers," "The Warden," "Dr. Thorne," "Framley Parsonage," "The Last Chronicle of Barsetshire," "The Small House at Allington."

In the same secondary category to which Trollope belongs, in spite of his great cleverness, I should also place Wilkie Collins—though Collins is in some respect a larger man than Trollope. He had a wider range of imagination, and a larger range of subjects. To identify him in a phrase, I should say that he was the greatest inventor of plot in the whole line of English novel writers. As for style, he had very little. He wrote almost like a journalist, but his plots were wonderful, and his dramatic sense was very great. He was the son of a painter, was born in London in 1824, and died in 1889. I believe that some of his work has been translated into Japanese. His stories have beeen translated into many languages, because of their inventive superiority and their eccentric and picturesque phases of character. There was another peculiarity about the work of Collins, which reminds us of Stevenson. He could make the reader extraordinarily interested in bad characters. Collins would describe villains of the most villainous kind, but they were such impersonations of force in evil-doing, they were such splendid, exceptional villains, that you could not help feeling a natural admiration for them, just as you might admire the graceful motions of a deadly serpent, the grace of a leopard, or the strength of a tiger. Such a villain is Count Fosco, in "The Woman in White." Again Collins loved to draw for us studies of wicked women,—women immensely clever, but capable of any crime, and passing their lives in

carrying out plots to ruin innocent people, or plots of revenge. Such a woman is the red headed governess in "Armadale." Now you will see that in such work Collins very nearly descends to the vulgar,—to that circle of sensation lovers who devour with delight stories about thieves and murderers and bad characters of every kind. Write a book about the life of a thief or prostitute, and you will have a great many readers. But what kind of readers? What keeps Collins from being absolutely vulgar is the fact that he idealises his bad characters, he makes them almost heroic, incarnations of badness, like the villains of the great English dramatists. Again he saves himself from vulgarity by the magnificent ingenuity of his plots. In this respect he is really in the circle of genius, and therefore a little beyond the range of Trollope.

Charles Reade also belongs to that school of novelists who deserve the name of story tellers, rather than that of literary men. He was the younger son of a country gentleman of means, and was born in 1814. He had no public school education, but nevertheless was able to obtain an Oxford fellowship, which made him practically independent. He may have suffered somewhat by means of his independence in his literary profession, for being independent may in some cases tempt a man to do a good many things which he would not dare to attempt if obliged to consult the opinions of the public or his own financial interests. A great deal in such cases depends upon character; and Reade's character was very curious. He was perhaps one of the most irritable men of letters that ever lived, and criticism of any kind threw him into a passion. He was therefore not only sensitive to the advice of good judges, but naturally inclined to oppose that advice to the utmost degree possible. This peculiar disposition probably prevented him from obtaining a higher position in literature than he received. He wrote about twenty volumes of extraordinarily uneven quality; some rose to the standard of greatness, some sank to the level

of mere sensationalism, but all had a good, bright style. Critics of eminence prefer the novel called "The Cloister and the Hearth," to any other of Reade's, and are inclined to give the next place to "It's Never Too Late to Mend." The first is a story of the days of Erasmus, and Reade used a great deal of historical matter in its compilation. The second is a story of the Australian gold fever. These are very good novels, and show a peculiar mingling of romance and of realism combined. I should give the preference, however, to an extraordinary book, "A Terrible Temptation," in which there is an excellent study of gipsy character as revealed in hereditary tendency. As for variety of subjects, it would be hard to name any English author who chose his themes from a more varied range of topics. He has given us stories of city life, studies of the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, studies of modern life in many places. The following list certainly comprises his finest books: "Peg Woffington," "Griffith Gaunt," "It's Never Too Late to Mend," "The Cloister and the Hearth," "A Terrible Temptation," "Christie Johnstone," "Hard Cash."

Before approaching the next group of novelists, I would call attention to the child stories of "Lewis Carroll." "Lewis Carroll" deserves separate attention. His real name was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. He was born in 1832, and educated at Christ Church, Oxford, where he obtained high honours in mathematics; and afterwards he became a clergyman. But his profession was that of lecturer on mathematics. In 1866 he produced a little book called "Alice in Wonderland," which has become famous in every part of the world. It has been translated into French, German, Italian, and other languages, and has passed through an immense number of editions. Carroll followed this up with other books in the same vein, such as "Sylvia and Bruno," "The Hunting of the Snark," "Through the Looking-Glass." These stories have an immense and peculiar value, because although apparently tales told to amuse

children, they are really psychological studies of superlative merit. What Carroll has really done is to describe the mental process of dreams in the brain of an intelligent child, perhaps the very most difficult thing to do either in psychology or in literature. For you must know what the child dreams about, and why such dreams are formed; then you must be able to describe the vacillations and distortions, the impossibilities and absurdities, of the vision, and all the extraordinary sensations that accompany it, in such a manner as to give the reader the exact sensation of the dream. To do this is possible only for the highest genius. Lewis Carroll, as he called himself, was such a genius, but no man ever seemed less desirous of becoming known to the world. It has only been within the last few years that the real authorship of his books was even guessed, and he continued to write under the assumed name. Judging from his work, he must have been one of the most sympathetic and lovable of men, but his extraordinary position in literature has been acquired without his own desire. He wrote these things only to please some children whom he loved, an example of a gigantic intellect applying itself to trifles with results great enough to startle the world.

We may now turn to the group of more recent writers who have reached literary fame, but before so doing, let us say a word or two about certain literary changes. Before the year 1880 English literature was almost completely dominated by the novel, as distinguished from the romance, and by the novel of a peculiar kind. It was the domestic novel, the novel in which Trollope especially excelled. To write a historical novel or a romance was in those years to risk loss of time and money. Only a very great genius could attempt it. The public wanted novels about family life and love and social matters. Short stories of wonderful beauty might be written, but made no impression. The hunger for one particular kind of fiction discouraged all attempts in other directions. Therefore it was inevitable

that until the public became tired of the domestic novel, no great literary change could take place. The change came about 1880, partly because the art of the domestic novel had become exhausted, and partly because a few writers of extraordinary talent suddenly made their appearance and compelled recognition. They were preceded by William Blackmore in 1869, but his "Lorna Doone" did not win for him a permanent place. The next great place was won by Stevenson. It is very probable that the success of Stevenson was helped by a literary change in America. Through the success of Bret Harte, the short story had begun to receive attention in England. Another help was the amazing development of the short story in France, in the hands especially of Maupassant, perhaps the greatest short story writer in all modern literature. When an Englishman then proved himself capable of writing powerful short stories, the public at last turned to him with eagerness. Twenty-five years before they would not have listened to him. Robert Louis Stevenson was born in 1850, of a family famous, not in literature, but in engineering and in lighthouse architecture. The Stevensons are probably known by name in Japan as well as in Europe. Robert was intended to be an engineer, but he refused to follow the necessary course of study. He was then given the alternative of studying law, and he graduated. But his literary tastes conflicted too much with the practice of law to admit of his achieving any success in that profession, and he wisely abandoned himself altogether to letters. His early writing exhibited the marks of an absolutely new talent, and succeeded so well that he soon found himself in a position to live by literary work alone. Regularly from the years 1878 to 1895 he continued to put forth an extraordinary amount of wonderful work, but ill health compelled him to leave England seven or eight years before his death. He settled in the Island of Samoa in the Pacific, where the gentleness of the climate probably prolonged a life already undermined by

consumption, but he died there while still a comparatively young man. As a writer he holds a place entirely distinct; it would be very difficult to say in one word exactly how high a place, but we may begin a consideration of his work with the statement that he re-created the taste for romance as distinguished from the novel.

Half of Stevenson's work is not of the highest class; it is only clever journalism, and this alone accounts for his great productivity. For the student of literature, while everything of Stevenson's best belongs to English letters, and will probably become classic at a later day, the rest of his work has practically no literary importance, and does not belong to our study. "An Inland Voyage," "The Travels with a Donkey," "The Essays on Men and Books," even "Virginibus Puerisque," can not be put in a high class. But even then we have a mass of work before us too great for the power of one sick man. It can only be explained by the fact that a considerable part of the work was done with help. "The Wrecker," "The Wrong Box," "The New Arabian Nights" were written, the first two in partnership with Mr. Lloyd Osborne, and the last with the assistance of Mrs. Stevenson. We must first give attention, therefore, to the books which Stevenson made alone, that is, so far as the title-page assures us; for it is probable that the story-teller always had some assistance, especially from his wife.

An extraordinary diversity of power is shown in his work. In "Kidnapped" and "Catriona" we have studies of Scotch life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; in "The Master of Ballantrae," sketches of the same life, with variations of adventures carried into North America. Stevenson here gives us studies of gentry, but an immense amount of research and of exact knowledge was necessary to depict the scenes of another century. The language, the costumes, the forms of speech and courtesy, the historical and social conditions of the epoch had to be thoroughly mastered before the story could be written. In the time of

Walter Scott such exactness was never required, perhaps it was never thought possible. But times have changed. Stevenson knew that the chance for a revival of romance depended altogether upon the application of realism to the romantic method. And this application he made as no other had done before him. Hence the greatness of the books, merely as artistic constructions. Nor was Stevenson afraid to go back even further in his period for materials. He gave us in "The Black Arrow" a study of the time of the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century, one of the principal figures in the narrative being Richard III. It is true that the author here professed only to be writing a romance for boys; nevertheless the book is one which most appeals to grown people. In "Treasure Island," which has been called the best sea story in English literature, the time is set in another century; but in "The Wrecker" we have proof that a modern sea story was equally within the power of the writer's genius. Romantic all these are, in the adventurous sense, but we have in them very little trace of two influences required in the older form of romance,—namely the terrible, the tragical, and the love story. For a long time it was even said that Stevenson was the one English writer who could write novels without women,—a fact which did not, however, imply that Stevenson could not create heroines, as he afterwards did, with immense success.

In the longer romances we are impressed by a certain air of reality, a consistency that prevents our asking whether the event described could have happened. But in some of the shorter stories, we enter at once into dreamland. In dreams a very normal person may do very immoral things; the sense of responsibility disappears. It is so in the delightful short tales. We read of the most extraordinary crimes without the least sensation of horror. Indeed, we feel at times rather amused. In "The Dynamiter" we have the story of an inventor who believes it a good thing to spread death about you as a sort of benefit to humanity.

A beautiful young lady assists him in these infernal operations, which happily terminate without any very frightful tragedy to the parties concerned. In "The Suicide Club" we have the story of a society of unhappy men who draw lots to decide the order in which they shall die, each member being killed by another in regular rotation, lots also being drawn for the killing. The mixture of absurdity with the tragedy here is artistic in the extreme, and justifies the character of the title given to the whole series of extravagant stories to which "The Suicide Club" belongs. The general title is "The New Arabian Nights,"—for "More New Arabian Nights," "The Dynamiter," etc., are only continuations of the first volume. Those of you who know the "Arabian Nights" will remember the peculiar feeling which the Oriental stories give—you are intensely interested always, but never shocked or scandalised even when reading scandalous or shocking stories. In fact, the feeling is exactly like that in dreams in which the moral sentiment has no existence. It is no small art to be able to imitate the tone of the "Arabian Nights" while choosing modern London or Paris for the scene of the narration. And this is the feat which Stevenson accomplished.

But when he wished to write moral stories, he could do so after a unique fashion. The narrative of "Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde" is an example. No book of the year in which it was published created a greater sensation. It is the story of a man with two natures in him, evil and good, who manages to appear throughout the greater part of his life as two persons. In the character of Dr. Jekyl he is one individual; in that of Mr. Hyde, he is another, and a strange chance alone reveals the identity of the two. Perhaps we might call this book one of the most remarkable among modern psychological stories. Undoubtedly it inspired a number of symbolical tales which made their appearance within the last few years, and among others a queer study by Henry James, in which a man is described as hav-

ing a social existence, but no private existence;—when you meet him in society he seems to be the most charming of men, but if you follow him into his private home he disappears; there is nobody, nothing but a suit of clothes. Both stories are likely to prove classics because they reflect moral facts in quite an original way. Stevenson has also given us moral stories illustrating the power of remorse, the value of content, and the inheritance of evil passions. On the last subject he produced the only extremely horrible narrative which ever was created by his pen. I mean "Olalla," the fancy of a beautiful girl born with an irresistible tendency to bite and devour human flesh. It is a frightful fable, but its real significance is one which is becoming more and more a question of the day,—a question relating to the deepest and the greatest of social problems.

Transported to the other side of the world, among a Polynesian race, it might have been expected that Stevenson's imagination would have been affected by his strange surroundings to no small degree. As a matter of fact, he continued in Samoa to work very much as he had worked in England, writing stories about European life. But at times he permitted the Polynesian influence to inspire him, and then he gave to the world little stories of the weirdest and strangest description,—illustrating the superstitions of a cannibal race whose religious and social customs differed from those of any other race until the time of their semi-civilisation by force. I would call especial attention to the collection entitled "The Beach of Falesa," now included, I believe, in the volume called "Island Nights Entertainments," but at first published separately. These Polynesian stories are unlike anything before written in any European language, and even their nightmare character does not detract from their delightfulness.

The stories written in connection with Mr. Osborne include something of what we might call roaring farce in literature. The "Wrong Box" is simply the narrative of a

man who finding a dead body upon his hands and anxious to get rid of it secretly in order to escape being arrested by the police on suspicion, tries to get rid of it by putting it in a box, and sending it to an imaginary address in London. A mischievous boy on the train sees in the car this and another large box, and to amuse himself changes the label upon the packages. Then the dead body begins to travel. Everybody who receives it naturally wishes to get rid of it as quickly as possible, but in spite of all efforts the police do get hold of it in the end. In "The Wrecker" we also have some excellent humour, but here the humour is mixed with the real terror of tragedy, and "The Wrecker" is on the whole anything but a funny book.

I should advise the reading of any of these works by Stevenson, and of another too, not yet considered, "Prince Otto,"an extraordinary book which has been translated into many languages. The advantage of the study of Stevenson is to be sought in his effects of style. By his style he belongs to the very first rank of English prose writers; he has never had a real superior; it is even a question whether among novelists he has ever had even an equal. The story charms, but the value is in the author's manifestation of new flexibilities and powers in the use of English, such as before him were practically unknown.

It remains to say a few words about the verse of Stevenson. This is not really the place in which to consider verse, except in its relation to the life and thought of the prose writer. For this reason any consideration of its technical force and merits would be out of place; but its emotional qualities deserve a word. It is not great poetry, but it is peculiarly imaginative, dainty and sincere. He was most successful in the volume called "A Child's Garden of Verses." There are not many grown men capable of any other thought of authorship, who have the power to portray the feelings and fancies of a child so as to be able to charm at once both the very young and very old. Steven-

son had this power, in a much less degree than Dodgson, but in a distinct way, and he deserves to be studied especially on account of it. I would recommend the reading, for example, of the little piece called "The Land of Counterpane," in which the imagination of a little child in bed looking at the wrinkles and folds of his bed covering, discovers in them mountains and valleys and forest-covered spaces.

But the Japanese reader should remember that the counterpane used in English beds is commonly white and covered all over with little white tufts of cotton, in which a child's fancy can easily discover wonderful shapes.

I think it is worth while to speak to you of three more writers in relation to the present epoch. I do not speak of Mr. James or Mr. Crawford, because these although writing in English are not Englishmen, but I can not help speaking to you of George Meredith, of Rudyard Kipling, and George Du Maurier, whose sudden death last year compels at least an attempt to estimate his place. In pure literature I think that George Meredith's place will be decided rather by his poetry than his prose, for he is a poet of no mean order. As a novelist, he is very great indeed,—great as a psychologist, as a student of the motives and acts of the most complex and delicate varieties of character, in the highest forms of English and foreign society. He has no rival in his own peculiar field, and his especial force seems to be in the depiction of a contest between two powerful characters in the social struggle. He is also great in his exactness,—in his perfect mastery of all the details of the epoch, the place or the condition which he paints. He is also great in his skill of portraiture,—in painting for us a multitude of different characters with such distinctness that we can see them and hear them; but I could certainly not recommend you to read any of George Meredith's novels, unless you want to read them only for the stories. The style is, in my opinion, detestable; it is certainly such a style as could not have any other than bad influence upon a student's style. It is collo-

quial, confidential,—as if the man were talking to you personally about matters which he presumed you knew all about; it is involved and often provokingly obscure, owing to a habit of suggesting facts rather than telling them. But if you should want to read something of Meredith so as to have a fair idea about his literary position, I should say to choose between "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel" and "Vittoria." These two will suffice to show his power in completely different directions, for "Vittoria" is a story of modern Italy in the time of the great struggle for national independence.

The place of Kipling is in any case, I think, more important than that of Meredith, and he is certainly much more worthy of your attention, for many reasons. It may seem strange to attach such significance to the name of a new apparition in literature; but I have good authority, following the example of the leading critics of the time, and I can not hesitate to express very plainly my admiration for the man and my conviction of his value to you in relation to the style of English prose literature, as well as of English verse.

Rudyard Kipling, like Thackeray, was born in India. He was born in Bombay in 1865, and made his reputation at the age of twenty-three. He was partly educated in England, but not at any of the universities. At an age when most youths are still studying, he was already editing newspapers, acting as war correspondent to English and Indian journals, and writing poems and stories. His abilities as a correspondent and journalist seem to have enabled him to travel over the greater part of the world before he was twenty-five years old. He has been almost everywhere, has seen almost everything, and has had nearly all those experiences of life, such as other men seldom have until they become old. This might account partly for the extraordinary character of his work; but you must remember also that his own abilities rendered this possible. His first success

was made in India. He was the son of a civil service official, and when he began journalism at Lahore, he must have known a great deal about the secrets of official life in India. He produced a number of witty satires in verse upon the follies, absurdities, and tragedies of official life in the colonies. These were collected and published in a little volume called "Departmental Ditties." They were not great; but as the work of a boy of eighteen or nineteen, they showed extraordinary knowledge of life, uncommon power of wit, and exceptional ability in the handling of many different forms of verse. The next work which appeared made him famous,—a collection of stories of Anglo-Indian life written to be sold upon the railways, and published at Allahabad. Everybody in India read them and wondered at them, and their reputation reaching England, arrangements were made for the publication of his future works. Everything that has since issued from Kipling's pen has been not only of unique merit, but of a character to attract attention immediately in every part of the world where English can be understood. Already Kipling is known in half a dozen different languages.

Not to dilate too much, I may say in short that the work of Kipling is represented by two novels, two story books for children, two volumes of extraordinary poetry, and three volumes of short stories. He is without any comparison whatever, the greatest writer of short stories in English, greater even than Stevenson at his best; there is absolutely no one with whom to compare him among English writers; to find comparison with him we must go to France. France produced in Maupassant perhaps the greatest short story writer in the whole history of literature; and it is only with Maupassant that I think Kipling can be compared. Mr. Gosse thinks otherwise, and finds that Kipling might be compared in some respects with Pierre Loti. But Mr. Gosse made this remark five or six years ago; I do not think he would say the same thing to-day. Loti, moreover, is not a

short story writer, but a sketch writer, and the only point in which he resembles Kipling is that both men have their nervous sensibilities developed to a degree rare in ordinary human beings. But the difference of the nervous organisation is enormous. Loti is all eye, ear, smell, taste. Kipling is all mind and eye.

There is nothing sensuous in his material; there is sensitiveness extraordinary, but it is the sensitiveness of facts in their relations to mental perception. He is supremely impersonal when at his best, and in this he resembles Maupassant, and also that other great story writer, Voltaire. But neither Maupassant nor Kipling ever wrote from imagination as did Voltaire. They resemble him only in strength and in the impersonality of their style. In Maupassant's case, as in Kipling's, the severity is even greater than in Voltaire's. Neither writer, in telling a story, describes; or rather both describe without describing. They do not tell you that a man is so many feet high, or that a woman's hair is just of such a colour, or that a street is built in just such a way, or a landscape had just such an appearance; but they can make you see the man, the woman, the street or the landscape much more plainly than almost anybody else could do who should attempt it. I say *almost* anybody else, because here the young French lieutenant, Loti, presents us with another and very different nineteenth century phenomenon. He can describe! As a rule, however, literary experience has shown, in our own time, that descriptions either of persons or of nature are not essential to good story telling, and that a strong artist can do much better without them. I am thinking of general rules only. When Maupassant went to Africa simply to study nature he thought himself justified in description, and the world thanks him for "Au Desert." So when Kipling has occasion at rare moments to speak of memories of extraordinary places which he has seen, and which very few other persons have seen, he describes just enough to make an everlasting picture in your mind. But

this, remember, is very rare, and has little connection with his art of story-telling. Even in such a marvellous thing as "The City of Dreadful Night," the suggestion of what the city looks like and what the surroundings are, is given to the reader much more vividly by the few terrible words about the sleepers under the open sky, and by the incidents of the heat in the streets and in the spiral staircase of the minaret, than could be done by any details about faces, landscape or architecture.

It is especially to this amazing power in Kipling that I wish to call your attention. No other story writer, always excepting Maupassant, is so much the reverse of prolix. The great art of telling a story depends just as much upon knowing what not to say, as upon knowing what to say; but the natural tendency of nearly all story tellers is to say more than is necessary. Kipling is a great object lesson of the contrary virtue. He never says more than just enough to convey the idea desired, never uses more adjectives than he can help, and never uses a weak one. In his choice of words he shows exactly the same sort of care that a poet shows in work of the first order. No one has managed to produce great effects with so few words. Some of his stories are only two or three pages long, but you will never forget those two or three pages after having read them, nor will you forget some extraordinary uses of words in those two or three pages—uses that give to the words an altogether new force and colour. Simplicity is the apparent quality of the style, produced by anything but simple methods. The sentences are hard, very short and very strong; they succeed each other like a rapid succession of powerful blows; they strike the imagination so as to produce that feeling of astonishment mixed with pleasure to which the French have given the name "inquietude," and to which Mr. Gosse has given the name of "intellectual uneasiness." Something of intellectual uneasiness is produced by any very superior power which manifests itself to us through literature. In

the presence of this mental and emotional superiority we feel at first just as uncomfortable as when we are introduced for the first time to some person of rank and power incomparably above our own.

Stories of Indian life, or of the life of English soldiers in India, make a distinct department of Kipling's work; but he is just as successful when writing of life in Africa, in Japan, in South America, in the United States, or in London, providing that he keeps to the form of the short story. Take for example "The Disturber of Traffic." Here we have the story of a man maddened by solitude, in one of the most lonesome parts of the globe,—keeper of a lighthouse in the Malay archipelago, with no one for companions but wild beasts, and one savage, more beast than man. The story is written in dialect, and is full of humour; but it is a terrible humour, this comedy of insanity in the midst of desolation, and its consequences in disturbing the traffic of the world. You know the man who wrote such a story must have been in the place described. Then we have another story of madness entitled "At the End of the Passage." Perhaps nothing equally horrible has ever been written about nightmare. The scene is, indeed, in upper India, but the event might happen anywhere else. "The Finest Story in the World," laid in London, deals with the question of remembering one's former lives. It shows that the author has not only been an extensive reader, but a reader of judgment. I doubt whether any better criticism upon Longfellow has ever been made, than those few references to him constitute, which occur in this really wonderful story. "Bertran and Bimi," and "Reingelder and the German Flag," are narratives of the American and Malay tropics; the first carries the element of terror to the very highest pitch excusable in art. Nearly always in the narrative, though the effect may be strange and unexpected, nothing appears to have been drawn from any other source than the observation of eye and ear. With the exception of the apparition

of a sea-serpent in one story, I can not at this moment remember anything in the multitude of them which might not have been really seen; and yet everything is unfamiliar. Even when we are brought into a camp of the British cavalry, and into the dining room of its officers, as in "The Man who Was," something happens in the most natural way which never could possibly have been anticipated. Again in London we go upstairs into a cheap lodging room to find assembled there a company of young English subalterns, "A Conference of the Powers." The conversation of these mere boys, as reported by the story teller, revealed to the English people more concerning colonial conditions than had been generally known before that time. There are then two remarkable faculties shown by the writer outside of his mere literary ability. One is the power to stir fear and wonder in the human mind as no other writer has been able to do, not by the help of the impossible, but by the simple statement of the possible. The other faculty is that of explaining some enormously complex social condition by the selection of a few powerful and extraordinary incidents which suggest all that can not be reported in detail.

The faculties of this man are not, however, confined to prose. As a writer of verse he has exhibited such power that no less than three eminent critics have declared that he should have been made poet laureate instead of the very insipid Austin. Certainly his claims to the laureateship would be justified by the splendid patriotism of those verses in which the whole work of English expansion is painted and panegyrized—such as "The Native Born," "The Flag of Their Country," "The Song of the Dead." Judged by such production Kipling impresses us, not only as a great poet, but as the highest lineal descendant of the old English *Scop*, or Northern Skald. Where he has surpassed every other English writer, however, is in his ballads and songs, where he remains incomparably first among moderns. But most of these ballads and songs are in dialect, and for that rea-

son are not paralleled with purely artistic ballad work such as that of Swinburne and Tennyson. They belong to a different and a special order. Yet in three or four examples he has attempted the artistic ballad, and he does not fall below the highest rank even then. A fine example is offered in the "Last Rhyme of True Thomas," probably written in scorn of the suggestion of his fitness for the laureateship. As for the form of his verse, I do not know how to define some qualities of it better than by saying that since Thomas Moore no English singer seems to have been born with such an ear for melody. This man's future may be, is now, a very interesting question. Some of his greatest admirers are afraid that he may exhaust his power even before the age at which most poets obtain recognition. He strikes them as being miraculously precocious; and there is always a great danger in precocity. But if there is one thing more characteristic of him than his mental power, that one thing is nervous force. Immense self-control, energetic strength, manly robustness show themselves in every line of his work. This tells of physical strength, but it reminds us of the chief defect which Kipling shows.

The defect is brutality. He is not only strong, but brutally strong, and manifests the pride of strength in unpleasant ways. He is nearly always cynical, and very often offensively so. Nothing which repels him escapes treatment because of its intrinsic disagreeableness; but is just on that account handled with diabolical force and mockery. There is very little of the tender, or gentle, or touching, in all this marvellous work; but there is a great deal of the strange, the horrible, the bloody, the morally terrible and naturally terrible. All his literary expression is like a celebration of Force, mental and moral physical force, as the ruler of humanity; it is the great song of strength, a song of Odin and Thor, a modern utterance of the old Scandinavian spirit. The teaching is, "Be strong under all circumstances, strong of will, strong of body; gentleness is weakness; it is moral

weakness; life is a fight; you must fight until you fall, and you must allow yourself to be killed rather than show a moment's weakness. You may be brutal, and still be a man; but you can not be weak and be a man. Everything great or noble in this world has been achieved by hard fighting, and through all time the conditions must be the same. This is my gospel." And yet he is capable of the most exquisite tenderness. You all know that the tenderness of a very strong, stern, and rough character has an extraordinary quality in it—something massive, overwhelming, and all-conquering, very different from the affection of feeble natures. It is such tenderness that we meet with in that exquisite passage of "The Naulahka," a novel, half American and half Indian, where the Hindoo Queen speaks to the missionary girl about the meaning of maternity. I do not think there is anything more powerfully touching in literature. But this tenderness appears very rarely, and only from the lips of women. Perhaps the harshness which has given so much literary offence is sufficiently explained by youth, and will wear off gradually. But on one occasion it was manifested to a degree which called out very severe criticism. This was on the publication of a novel called "The Light that Failed," the story of an artist who became suddenly blind at the height of his success. The characters of the story were nearly all brutal to an extraordinary degree, even the women being, as Mr. Gosse says, utterly detestable. There were incidents of the fighting in the Soudan, which were offensively horrible, such as that of a war correspondent tearing out the eyes of an Arab who had attacked him. Probably Kipling had himself seen the incident, but it was too much to be borne in print. Although ordinarily indifferent to criticism, he on this occasion yielded to the extent of rewriting and republishing the whole book. But it is still a question whether he would have done better to leave it alone as one of the productions of his youth before his taste had been developed to the high level of his talent.

If I have dwelt so long upon one man's name, it is because of my sincere belief that the text of Kipling's stories ought to have exceptional value with Japanese students. I do not think his wonderful poetry can be of much service to you. It is too idiomatic even when not written in dialect. But his prose is unique prose, the only prose of the nineteenth century which offers you all the qualities of concentration and strength that characterize the best French writers. If there be any qualities especially absent from the composition of Japanese students, these are concentration and force. It is therefore that I especially recommend a careful study of at least the best among this writer's stories, believing, at the same time, that the peculiar talent exhibited in them is really more in accord with the art of the best Japanese story-tellers than anything which contemporary English writers of fiction can offer.

The case of George Du Maurier is a most unusual one. Within the space of about five years he made himself an extraordinary name in literature, and then disappeared from the world by a sudden death even before it had time to judge or explain him. Du Maurier was not by profession an author at all. He was an artist, the artist of the great English comic paper "Punch," and his specialty was the portraiture of society life. His drawings were delicious, on account of their amazing truth and their delicate irony. As his name might suggest, he was only half-English; and having been educated on both sides of the Channel, either French or English came to him with equal readiness as the medium of expression. Probably the French element in his blood dominated a little, for he wrote English in French forms; but this might also be accounted for by the paramount influence of the study of those French authors whom he loved. It was in his advanced years that he first took a notion to write, and produced an astonishing novel called "Peter Ibbetson," illustrated by himself in a most admirable way. Everything in this book—plot, fancy, style—was to-

tally new. The startling idea that under certain conditions of self-training, the power of entering into the spiritual world might be obtained during one's lifetime, immediately gave the book a great vogue among those thousands interested in spiritual problems. Another singular fact about the story was that it presented to English readers, in a totally new way, some of the most remarkable of the ideas of Buddhism, and of Indian Brahmanism. It suggested new possibilities of remembering one's former life. Finally it was to some extent a musical novel, an artistic novel, and a social novel. It had every quality that could attract the largest possible class of readers belonging to the world of culture. Then the style was so queer, so French, free, eccentric, contrary to all English convention, and nevertheless full of poetry and charm. But remarkable as this book was, the volume that followed it was much more successful. I mean "Trilby." This was a story about hypnotism. A very great musician, himself without a voice, conceives the idea of mesmerizing a woman and using her as a sort of instrument through which to sing. He finds such a woman among the models who pose for the art students of Paris, obtains complete control of her will, and makes himself famous by means of her. She sings in the theatre to immense audiences, and is supposed to be the greatest singer in the world; but she is really unconscious of anything that she is doing in the theatre; she is mesmerized; and she sings not with her own knowledge or will, but by the science and will of her mesmerizer. He suddenly dies, and her power to sing is gone, for she never knew anything herself about music. This is the central theme of the story, which otherwise introduces a number of interesting characters and interesting incidents. The life of art students in Paris, a life which Du Maurier was perfectly familiar with, is represented in this volume with a grace of mingled pathos and comedy reminding us of Henri Murger. The success of the book was exaggeratedly great—perhaps fully half a

million copies have been sold up to this time. Extraordinary social crazes were created by it, and all kinds of fantastic things were done by young women who imagined that their feet were as beautiful as the feet of Trilby. The literary world proper remained dumb with astonishment. Such work violated all canons, yet there was no denying its power and beauty. Its success could not be called merely vulgar. How could a man who had never studied the art of writing at all, who never had any literary training, who would not submit to any literary rules, perform a feat of this amazing kind? To-day, I think, the answer has been given. The success of Du Maurier's work really rested upon the same power which made the success of the best French and English writers of the century, and that power was the power of observation. Du Maurier had studied human life, under the most favorable conditions and with the most exceptional opportunities, for nearly fifty years before committing his impressions to paper. Hence their value, which is not likely to prove merely ephemeral.

CHAPTER XIX

WRITERS OF SOCIETY VERSE

We ought to consider one department of light verse, very difficult indeed for the student in Japan to understand in itself, but very important for him to understand as a literary fact. I mean what is called society verse, or to use the French words, *vers de société*. Long ago the French invented and perfected this kind of poetry, but it has been within our own time only that we have been able to produce it successfuly in English.

Let me now try to explain what it is. Society verse must reflect the life and thought of the refined classes in a realistic way; it must mirror the peculiar ideas of the time, the fashions of dress, the fashions of thought, the fashions of speech. As all these constantly change, one characteristic of such poetry must necessarily be impermanence. Its value, compared with serious poetry, must be ephemeral; but it may always have another kind of value, that of preserving for future generations both the material and the moral fashions of a moment.

The difficulty of writing this kind of verse is a difficulty created by limitations. The writer must belong to society, and must understand society very well indeed in order to attempt such composition. Now, I need scarcely tell you that in every country the most refined class has a particular life of its own, a particular morality of its own, a particular and minute discipline which everybody within its ranks must obey every hour of his or her life. I can not pretend to tell you all about this; I would only suggest that it will be well for you to figure to yourselves the difference between the aristocratic life of Japan in other days, and that of the

common people, in order to appreciate the extent of the corresponding difference in western society. Without going into needless particulars I may observe that the rules of conduct in the upper classes do not necessarily correspond with the rules of conduct in the lower classes. Altogether the man or woman is much less free. Also we may notice that the moral condition is peculiar, much more peculiar in western aristocracy than it ever was in the aristocracy of the Far East. By way of example, I would say that certain breaches of morality which are never forgiven by ordinary society may be pardoned in superior society, provided that they do not become too public; but things which in every-day life we should consider trifles are never pardoned at all. If you know how to do it you may break several of the commandments in high society and remain there; but if you are once caught in a dishonourable action, however small, in playing at cards, for example, there is no hope for you. I make these remarks only by way of introduction to the fact that society life is quite apart from other life; and that it has its own special rules for action, called by modern philosophers, "aristocratic morals."

Now one of the things generally understood in society is that everybody must possess perfect self-control. Strong emotions must never be publicly shown. To show extraordinary admiration would be almost as bad as to show great anger. In that atmosphere you must always keep very cool indeed. As in climbing a mountain, the higher you go the colder the air becomes, so in the higher society. This does not mean that the persons belonging to that world should have less affection, less emotion, less susceptibility to beautiful things, than ordinary persons; nor does it even mean that the indulgence of emotion under proper circumstances is condemned. It only means that in public, in company, the society man or woman must act differently from other persons, just as in military life the discipline ceases only when the officer, entering his private room, takes

off his uniform. Now the poetry which pictures the life of this refined world, is denied most of the privileges accorded to serious poetry. Commonly the poet can choose any form that he pleases; he is permitted to express, with all the forces at his command, and with all the sincerity of his heart, every normal passion of human nature. Not so in society verse. In society verse he must only suggest that the emotion is there, that it is alive, and that it is under perfect control and will never be allowed to utter itself openly. The subject of love ought to furnish us with the best example, because that is considered by western psychologists the most powerful of all passions. Well, how does society verse express love? Always playfully, so that the reader can not be quite sure whether the utterance is in jest or in earnest. If you find anything passionate, anything like the song of a nightingale, in light verse, that is not society verse; the rule of restraint has been broken. I have spoken of one emotion only, but you must remember that the same discipline must be extended over all emotion in the writing of society verse.

Really the society idea, with all its faults, and in spite of all that may be said against it, is the highest of which human nature is capable so far as conduct is concerned. The general principle is to meet and endure all influences, pleasurable or painful, precisely as a soldier meets the fire of the enemy, except that society judges a yielding to pleasure a weakness just as disgraceful as a yielding to fear or pain. "Take the world as it is," society says; "enjoy quietly, suffer quietly, and never strip your heart naked—that is vulgar!" Of course this life has its tragedies—tragedies more terrible, more pitiless, than any others, because they are moral; but they must not be spoken of. Extremes of pleasure and pain are to be kept out of sight. Under all circumstances, even in the face of death, a pleasant or an absolutely placid exterior must be preserved. And as in battle soldiers may joke or sing as much as they please, but any exhibition of fear or pain would be considered disgraceful, so in every

phase of society life mirth and jest are permitted. Here also, however, there are limitations. Joviality must be kept within exact boundaries; it must never become coarse, it must never be stupid, and, although it may be cutting, it must not be too cruel. In one sense social discipline changes with every generation. But in another sense it never changes. Whatever the fashions or the rules, the object is always the same—to train human nature to moral strength by self-suppression. Often we have a right to laugh at the rules and to mock at the fashions. But we have no right to laugh at the purpose; and as a matter of fact no sensible man ever does laugh at it.

I have said enough to show you what society verse must reflect, and how much its scope is confined. We may now turn to the verse-makers and to the verse itself. There are only three names in English literature of real importance in this field. All three belong to Victorian poetry, and all three have taken a very high rank as delicate artists. They have not confined their work altogether to society verse; but they especially represent it, and remain unequalled at it, except by the French; whereas their efforts in other directions have been not only equalled but excelled by greater poets, by the poets of the first rank.

The founder of this school, if we can call it a school, was Frederick Locker, born in 1821. He became at an early age a clerk in the British Admiralty, and kept that position until late in life. In 1857 he produced a very small volume of society verse called "London Lyrics," which at once took the fashionable as well as the literary world by storm. The playful, delicate grace of the compositions, their strange mixture of light cynicism and suggested tenderness, the supreme art that kept their expression always balanced upon the difficult line between laughter and tears, well deserved the praise which they obtained. Publishers at once made tempting offers to Locker, but he proved absolutely indifferent to money and to commendation; he would not write

except when he pleased. This is the best and truest literary policy, but very few authors can afford it. Locker remained silent for nearly twenty-two years before he printed anything else; then he brought out a little book called "Patchwork," a charming mixture of poetry and prose. His daughter was married to Lionel Tennyson, son of the poet, and his literary friendships were very numerous. After the death of his first wife he married the daughter of Sir Curtis Lampson; and on the death of his father-in-law he assumed the family name of the latter, so that upon the title page of the later editions of his books you find that the name of the author is given as Frederick Locker-Lampson. He wrote nothing more of poetry; but he edited a volume of verse called "Lyra Elegantiarum," which proves him to have been possessed of an excellent critical faculty. His death occurred but very recently.

The second name to which I call your attention is that of Henry Austin Dobson, more generally known as Austin Dobson,—who was born in 1840, and has at the present time a very great reputation both as poet and critic. He also was in the government service, a service which in England would seem to have done a great deal for literature, simply by enabling men of ability to obtain a fair amount of leisure together with a good salary and a certain position. Dobson is not so much known for society verse as for exquisite literary work in other directions; but he certainly comes nearest to Locker in this kind of composition. Recently a new edition of his poems has been issued in one volume; but previously they filled three volumes which became very famous both in England and in America—"Old World Idyls," "At the Sign of the Lyre," and "Proverbs in Porcelain." Besides society verse, Dobson has especially excelled in imitating difficult French forms in English poetry, and not forms only, but the very tone and spirit of former periods of French art. Nor has he been less successful in imitating certain old-fashioned English forms. He

has written poems exactly in the style of the men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and he is generally admitted to be the greatest living authority upon the literature of Queen Anne's day.

Neither of the above mentioned poets was an English university man, though Dobson appears to have received very superior literary training abroad. The training for the English civil service is of a special character, and the ordinary university course is not the best preparation. The third name in our category is, however, that of a university man, of a Fellow of Oxford, Andrew Lang. Lang was born in 1844, and has devoted his life so far altogether to literary and critical work. He is one of the chief figures among the active men of letters still living; and the range and variety of the subjects in which he has won literary distinction are surprising. For example, he is a folklorist, and the author of an excellent little book of folklore studies entitled "Custom and Myth"; then he is an exquisite classical scholar, who has given us, with the help of other scholars, the best translations ever made in prose of Homer, Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus; and he is also the author of some admirable translations from the French. Besides all this, he has produced at intervals extraordinary and ingenious books, written in imitation of the styles of other centuries, such as his "Letters to Dead Authors." Poetry is therefore but one, and not the greatest, of his occupations, but he has written very pretty things in verse, and by his "Ballades in Blue China," and "Rhymes à la Mode," he has attached himself especially to the circle of society verse poets.

Having said so much about society verse and its three most eminent representatives, I shall try to give you some examples of the best work done by each of these. Some of the best of this kind of verse I fear you could not understand, especially the humorous quality of it, which depends so much upon perfect knowledge of the fashion, the tone and the time. So some of the subtler refinements of this poetry

I can not attempt to explain; but there are compositions which I think will please you and which I have selected especially with this end in view. First, I shall call your attention to an example from Frederick Locker, entitled "A Nice Correspondent." The reader must remember that the poem is supposed to be a letter, and a letter from a wife, most probably—perhaps from a betrothed—to her absent husband or lover.

The glow and the glory are plighted
To darkness, for evening is come;
The lamp in Glebe Cottage is lighted,
The birds and the sheep-bells are dumb.
I'm alone, for the others have flitted
To dine with a neighbour at Kew,
Alone, but I'm not to be pitied—
I'm thinking of you!

I wish you were here! Were I duller
Than dull, you'd be dearer than dear;
I am drest in your favourite colour—
Dear Fred, how I wish you were here!
I am wearing my lazuli necklace,
The necklace you fastened askew!
Was there ever so rude or so reckless
A Darling as you?

I want you to come and pass sentence
On two or three books with a plot;
Of course you know "Janet's Repentance"?
I'm reading Sir *Waverley* Scott,
That story of Edgar and Lucy,
How thrilling, romantic, and true!
The Master (his bride *was* a goosey!)
Reminds me of you!

You will observe the charming mixture of playful mischief and tenderness in this letter—tenderness evidently very deep, but kept under perfect restraint. Terms of endearment are used, and strong ones, but they are used with faultless taste and always with just a touch of affectionate ban-

ter. Also the colloquial is used, exactly as in real conversation, yet never except as a refined lady could use it. By colloquial I mean especially such expressions as "flitted" instead of "gone"; "dull" instead of "melancholy" or "tired"; and the playful "pass sentence" instead of "tell me your opinion." The universal woman is nevertheless to be very plainly and charmingly discerned behind the society woman. Everything noble and good that she reads about reminds her of the man she loves and idealises, for woman's love always idealises. Her husband or lover is a poet; therefore it is no use to tell her that he is not the greatest poet in the world. Of course she would not say so too seriously, but she hints quite prettily—

They tell me Cockaigne has been crowning
A poet whose garland endures;—
It was you that first told me of Browning,—
That stupid old Browning of yours!
His vogue and his verve are alarming,
I'm anxious to give him his due,
But, Fred, he's not nearly so charming
A poet as you!

We may omit a very pretty verse showing how she admires her Frederick's skill in shooting, riding, speech-making, and even in fascinating other women—harmless fascination, she knows very well; and she is not in the least jealous, for she is perfectly sure of Frederick's heart. Nevertheless sometimes society tires her a little, because its exactions keep her too much away from the man she loves best.

Alas for the World, and its dearly
Bought triumph, its fugitive bliss;
Sometimes I half wish I were merely
A plain or a penniless Miss;
But perhaps, one is best with "a measure
Of pelf," and I'm not sorry, too,
That I'm pretty, because it's a pleasure,
My darling, to you!

Although weary of society and of the attraction that her own beauty and wealth make about her, she remembers that her money, or "pelf" as she playfully calls it, may help to make her husband more happy; and as for her beauty, she must take care of that too, only because *he* loves her. The poem ends with a simply delicious touch about the letter itself—

> Your whim is for frolic and fashion,
> Your taste is for letters and art;—
> This rhyme is the commonplace passion
> That glows in a fond woman's heart.
> Lay it by in some sacred deposit
> For relics—we all have a few!
> Love, someday they'll print it, because it
> Was written to you!

The suggestion, of course, is that her Frederick will some day become so famous that people will be only too glad to find and print anything written about him by anybody. As for the society-tone about which I have been telling you, notice its appearance even in this tenderest of all the stanzas, where she speaks of her affection as "commonplace," and uses the word "fond" in the old sense of foolish. The reference to relics perhaps you may not understand. "Relics" here means those letters, locks of hair, photographs, little presents received from persons dear to us or persons dead, which we preserve all our lives as affectionately and as reverently as if they were relics of saints.

It is curious that this subject of relics is the subject also of the representative poem by Austin Dobson which I selected for you, without thinking that the pleasant juxtaposition was to come about. The title of this piece is "A Gage d'Amour," which all of you studying French know means a pledge of love. Western lovers have been for hundreds of years in the habit of giving each other little things to be remembered by—a glove, a handkerchief, a lock of hair, or even a flower. In this case the pledge is a scarf of

rich lace, showing that the beloved must have belonged to some very wealthy circle. An old man taking this scarf out of a drawer in his room, is observed by his young nephew, who tries to tease him about it. His explanation has a mocking sweetness, a cynical poetry that would be difficult to overpraise. In society verse, I think this piece is Dobson's best. Let us now see how he tells the story about "a scarf that Some one used to wear":

Some one who is not girlish now,
And wed long since. We meet and bow;
I don't suppose our broken vow
Affects us keenly;
Yet, trifling though my act appears,
Your Sternes would make it ground for tears,—
One can't disturb the dust of years
And smile serenely!

"My golden locks" are grey and chill,
For hers,—let them be sacred still;
But yet, I own, a boyish thrill
Went dancing through me,
Charles, when I held yon yellow lace;
For, from its dusty hiding place,
Peeped out an arch, ingenuous face
That beckoned to me.

We shut our heart up, nowadays,
Like some old music-box that plays
Unfashionable airs that raise
Derisive pity;
Alas!—a nothing starts the spring;
And lo, the sentimental thing
At once commences quavering
Its lover's ditty.

The old man is making gentle fun of his own heart, but we can see that it is a very noble and tender heart, and that it has been deeply touched. Probably it was the beautiful ghost that beckoned to him which kept him a bachelor all his life. He compares his feelings, apologetically, to an

old music-box, out of order, which plays old-fashioned music that nobody of the present age cares to hear. Such a music-box should not be played in polite society; but unfortunately, the machinery has got a little damaged, and the slightest touch sets it into discordant motion. The comparison is very witty, but also very touching. It is as if he were saying to us, "I am an old man, and my memories, my experiences of love and all that sort of thing, ought not to be talked about or noticed; but, just because I am old, the machinery of my heart is a little broken, and makes music sometimes when nobody wishes to hear it." And he goes on, half merrily, half tenderly—

> Laugh, if you like. The boy in me,—
> The boy that was,—revived to see
> The fresh young smile that shone when she,
> Of old, was tender.
> Once more we trod the Golden Way,
> That mother you saw yesterday,
> And I, whom none can well portray
> As young, or slender.
>
> She twirled the flimsy scarf about
> Her pretty head, and stepping out,
> Slipped arm in mine, with half a pout
> Of childish pleasure.
> Where we were bound no mortal knows,
> For then you plunged in Ireland's woes,
> And brought me blankly back to prose,
> And Gladstone's measure.

Paraphrased, this means, "You may laugh at me if you please; I do not care about that, because I am strong enough to laugh at myself. But when I saw that old scarf, I could not help thinking about the beautiful face of the young girl whom I loved when I was a boy, and the ghost of my boyish feeling came back again to haunt me. I thought of the bright morning forty or fifty years ago, perhaps, when we took a walk together, she leaning upon my arm. I saw

her face just as it was in those days, yet she is the old woman with children whom you saw yesterday; and in fancy I and she, boy and girl again, were walking along the golden road of love. I do not know where we were going to, because you suddenly interrupted my dream by reading to me all that stuff about Irish politics in the newspaper, and about the new plan proposed by Mr. Gladstone. So my poetry was changed into prose." And he closes the subject with a characteristic toast; I say characteristic, because it is so exquisitely typical of the spirit of this kind of poetry, at once mocking and pathetic—

> Well, well, the wisest bend to Fate;
> My brown old books around me wait,
> My pipe still holds, unconfiscate,
> Its wonted station.
> Pass me the wine. To Those that keep
> The bachelor's secluded sleep
> Peaceful, inviolate and deep,
> I pour libation.

Which means, "Love is a matter about the result of which the wisest of us can not know. I could not get the girl I loved, so I never married, and I ought not to allow myself to think too much about old times. After all, I ought to be content; here are my dear old books, and here is my pipe, which I should not, perhaps, be allowed to smoke in the house if I had a wife. Sleeping alone has its advantages as well as its drawbacks; to all bachelors I drink good health."

I am not sure that you can see all the beauty and delicacy of the preceding poem in a short glance such as we have given it; but I think that when you read it over again, by yourselves, you will be more pleased with it. The finest passage in it is certainly the verse which compares the heart of an old man to a broken music-box. And curiously enough, an almost similar comparison is the subject of a poem by the third of the society verse writers we are considering,

Andrew Lang. It is not so exquisite, I think, as that single stanza by Dobson; but it is beautiful, and it is an excellent example of the quality of this kind of poetry.

THE SPINET

My heart's an old spinet with strings
  To laughter chiefly tuned, but some
That Fate has practised hard on, dumb,
  They answer not, whoever sings.
  The ghosts of half-forgotten things
Will touch the keys with fingers numb,
The little mocking spirits come
  And thrill it with their fairy wings.

A jingling harmony it makes,
  My heart, my lyre, my old spinet,
And now a memory it wakes.
  And now the music means "forget,"
And little heed the player takes
  Howe'er the thoughful critic fret.

This kind of play with emotion, light as it seems, is very strong, and you know that gracefulness is the result of the combination of lightness with strength. Unless society verse have these qualities, it is poor stuff. You should notice also that such play has its rational value; its fancies come very close at times to scientific thought. In a scientific sense the nervous system of man—the heart, as the poet calls it, in the emotional sense—has a life history very closely resembling that of a musical instrument. And I should like to remind you that the finest illustration in the whole of Spencer's Psychology, is a comparison of the combinations of thought and emotion to the combinations produced upon a piano.

I shall not say anything more about society verse, my object being only to awaken your interest in it, and to prompt you to see for yourselves whether there is anything that can be learned from it.

CHAPTER XX

A POEM BY LORD HOUGHTON

Among many English noblemen who have figured in Victorian literature with more or less credit to themselves, there was perhaps nobody who could write more hauntingly at times than Lord Houghton. He did not write a great deal, but a considerable proportion of the few pieces which he did write have found their way into anthologies, and are likely to stay there. I shall quote and comment upon only one of these, which I think to be the best—not, perhaps, as mere verse, but as a bit of emotional thinking. The subject is a curious one, a subject which has driven some men almost mad. It was this subject which especially tormented the matchless French story-teller, Guy de Maupassant, shortly before he lost his reason; and he wrote a terrible essay about it. Very young men never think of the matter at all, but few men of intelligence reach middle life without having thought about it. I mean this fact,—that no one human being can ever really understand another human being. We think we know a great deal about our friends, or about our enemies—at least we think so while we are young. But later on we discover that there are depths or abysses in every human character, which we can not know anything about. A character is really like the sea. When we look at the sea we observe only the surface,—the changes of colour, the motion of waves and the foam. When we look at our friends it is really much the same; we can see the surface only, the mood of the moment, the aspect of kindness or gratitude or sympathy passing over that other life as waves or colours play over the surface of the water. But the profundities are beyond our vision. Really the father does not

know his child, nor the husband his wife, nor the wife her husband. There is always a something hidden in the frankest child which the most loving mother can not discern. Naturally it must be so, because every individual has something of the infinite within him; because also the feelings and tendencies of millions and millions of past lives are stored up in every present life. When you come to think about it, either from the scientific point of view or from the purely metaphysical point of view, you will perceive that it could not be otherwise. But the first time that a man learns this fact, it comes like a great shock to him. It is really a very terrible thing, and requires a little philosophical coolness to consider it. Here is what Lord Houghton said about it:

STRANGERS YET

Strangers yet!
After years of life together,
After fair and stormy weather,
After travel in far lands,
After touch of wedded hands,—
Why thus joined? Why ever met,
If they must be strangers yet?

Strangers yet!
After childhood's winning ways,
After care and blame and praise,
Counsel asked and wisdom given,
After mutual prayers to Heaven,
Child and parent scarce regret
When they part—are strangers yet!

Strangers yet!
After strife for common ends—
After title of "old friends,"
After passions fierce and tender,
After cheerful self-surrender,
Hearts may beat and eyes be met
And the souls be strangers yet.

Strangers yet!
Oh! the bitter thought to scan
All the loneliness of man!
Nature, by magnetic laws,
Circle unto circle draws,
But they only touch when met—
Never mingle—strangers yet!

The comparison of each life to a complete circle or sphere, which may touch another sphere but never penetrate it, is not new, but it is used here with great force. This problem is the same thing to which of later years French psychologists have been giving so much attention under the title of Multiple Personality. It is not that there is really a hidden man within the man; it is that every personality is extraordinarily complex and that this complexity is perpetually changing, so that the individual is not really the same at all times and places in his relation to other individuals. Viewed scientifically, the fact seems to be a natural result of evolution, but that does not make it less wonderful, nor, in a certain sense, less awful.

This is the best poem that Lord Houghton ever wrote in his long life, and he wrote a great deal of fairly good poetry. But he wrote nothing else quite so good as this; it has that rare quality which appeals to universal human experience. I often fancy that the condition of his own life must have been particularly likely to inspire him with reflections upon this subject. He lived really a double existence; but the principal part of his life was given—like that of another remarkable English nobleman, the younger Lord Lytton—to diplomacy, an occupation which certainly keeps minds out of sympathy with each other. He was born in 1809, and died in 1885. After leaving the university he almost immediately entered public life, became within a few years a member of Parliament, and remained a prominent figure in politics for more than a generation. He was known only as Richard Monckton Milnes before he was raised to the

peerage. You would scarcely suppose that such a man could have found time to devote to poetry and song. But he was really double-natured. He had a great vein of sentiment, and such a love of literature that he sought out and made friends with almost every literary person of the time. At Cambridge he had been the friend of Tennyson and Hallam and other brilliant men, but these acquaintances among the aristocracy of literature did not have the effect of making him at all exclusive. Even while a distinguished statesman, he would go out of his way to find some poor student poet and offer his friendship and assistance. Thus he became the helper of many struggling geniuses, and was looked up to by hundreds of young men with gratitude and esteem. However, once outside of the literary circle, the man was hard and cold as steel, keen as the edge of a sword. Had it been otherwise he could not have fulfilled the double duties of his life. And yet perhaps it was owing to this very fact—that he had to be one person in his literary friendship and a totally different person in his diplomatic and political sphere of action—that he began to feel at last that weird lonesomeness which inspired his little poem "Strangers Yet."

CHAPTER XXI

EDWARD FITZGERALD AND THE RUBAIYAT

FITZGERALD was born in 1809, and studied at Cambridge. At Cambridge he made the friendship of Tennyson, and of many other distinguished literary personages. Inheriting considerable property, he was able to give all his life to literary and artistic pursuits, without adopting any profession at all. He lived in a pleasant home in the country, surrounded by books in many languages; and he very seldom showed himself in society. At first he published his literary work only for the benefit of his friends—not even putting his name upon the title page of his first publication. Though he lived to be a very old man, his success came only a little before his death. The beauty of his work could not at first be understood by the public. It is now so fully understood that he has become a great classic. Perhaps that is enough to tell you about him. But there is one more fact to mention about his work. It is not original—at least not original in the ordinary sense. It consists almost entirely of translations from the Spanish, the Persian, and the Greek. Therefore you might well wonder how mere translation could rise to the dignity of the very highest place in literature. The only possible answer is that Fitzgerald was probably the best translator that ever lived. He did not make literal translations; he translated only the spirit, the ghost of things. But for that reason he did what no man had ever succeeded in doing before him, and what no one is likely to do again for hundreds of years. He had not only great scholarship, but exquisite taste. In this respect he reminds us very much of the poet Gray; and his life was really like that of Gray in many respects.

I need only mention his translation of the Spanish dramatist Calderon. It is the best that exists. I need not mention at all his shorter pieces; they do not concern us here. His masterpiece was a translation of the quatrains of Omar Khayyám, a Persian poet who sang in the latter part of the eleventh century. Before we go any further into the subject of Fitzgerald's work, we must talk for a moment about Omar Khayyám. His story is very interesting and very strange. In the eleventh century, at a little school in the Persian City of Naishápúr, there were three students studying Mohammedan law together, under a very famous teacher. These three students were strongly united in friendship, and one day they made this agreement between them,—that whichever of the three should first succeed in life, he would help the other two in any way that lay in his power. One of these students was the famous Nizám-ul-Mulk, who afterwards became Vizier, to the great Sultan Alp Arslan; the second student was our poet Hakim Omar Khayyám; and the third, who afterwards made a most terrible name in the history of the world, was Hasan ben Sabbáh. At that time the three were little more than boys, but they knew that successful students in that school usually obtained good positions, so they made that friendly agreement together. Several years passed, and one of the young men actually became Vizier—that is to say, Prime Minister. Then his old school friend, Hasan, came to him, and asked for a position under the government; and he got it. Then came Omar Khayyám, and said to the Vizier, "I do not want any honour or high position; but please give me a little pension, so that I can devote the whole of my time to poetry and study." The Vizier gave him a very good pension, and a small house to live in near the palace, and he lived in that house until he died. The Vizier had no reason to be sorry for his kindness to Omar. But it was very different in the case of Hasan. Hasan conspired against his benefactor and former friend, but was found

out and banished from the country. He then passed into Syria and founded the most terrible sect that ever existed,—the sect of the Ismailians or Assassins. You may remember reading of these people in the history of the East. Among them it was the law that if the chief told a man to go and kill a prince or a king, that man had to go. Many kings and princes were killed by this secret society; and you may remember that King Edward of England was stabbed by one of these men and saved only by the heroism of his wife, who sucked the poison from the wound, for the assassins used poisoned weapons. Their chief became known throughout the world as the Old Man of the Mountains; for he and his followers lived in an almost inaccessible mountain fastness. The sect continued to exist until the great Tartar invasion, when it was exterminated. But Hasan, long before that, sent a man to kill his former friend, the Vizier, and Nizám was murdered.

But Omar always kept the favour of the court, and remained in his little house writing poetry about life and love and wine and roses. Being not at all in sympathy with the religious zeal of his time, he was considered by many as a very profane and blasphemous poet; but he seems to have been well protected by friends in the court. I suppose you know that the Mohammedan religion strictly forbade the drinking of wine, and recommended sobriety in all things, and great simplicity of life. This teaching, in its early form, was good, and the first Khalifs strictly observed it. They understood that the great battles of Islam had been won by the self-denial and hardihood of the simple men who had come out of the desert, the Arab horsemen, contented with the plainest of food and one meal a day, but afterwards the doctrine was pushed to great extremes by fanatical sects. Then was to be seen, on one side, asceticism carried to most extraordinary lengths, and on the other hand unbridled luxury. But in the time of Omar the

ascetic religious poetry was in the ascendency. Now this religious element was, in one way, strangely like a certain religious element in India; very possibly it may have been influenced by Indian philosophy. There was a Mohammedan mysticism, a pantheism extraordinarily like the Indian pantheism, but kept within conformity to the theology of the Korán. The mystics believed that by certain austere practices supernatural knowledge might be obtained. They believed in the unity of man with the divine nature. They believed in a great many strange things as well, and established many different schools and systems, which were constantly arguing with each other. It was probably in contempt for all this that Omar Khayyám wrote his famous verses. He boldly took the ground that we do not know and can not know anything about a future life, or a supernatural world. He declared that all that we do know belongs to this world of sense, and that the best thing for man to do is to take as much pleasure out of this life as he honestly can, without giving himself any trouble about the mystery of the universe. Of course this is a very simple way of putting the case; and if Omar had had nothing else to say, he would not have been worth reading. But the great, the immortal charm of his composition happens to be in the way that he treats this very problem of the universe which he advises us not to worry about. The impermanency of existence, the riddle of death, the fading of youth, the folly of philosophy in trying to explain the unexplainable—these are the topics which Omar Khayyám has considered in the most winning and beautiful verse with a strange mixture of melancholy and of ironical humour.

The English translator has correctly imitated the Oriental measure in these quatrains,—which contain four lines all rhyming together except the third. The third line has no rhyme; the other three rhyme. Occasionally you may find the whole four rhyming together; but that is an exception to

the general rule of the verse. The imitation of this Oriental measure may thus be said to have given to English literature an entirely new form of verse.

Now let us turn to the composition itself, beginning with some quotations which express Omar's views regarding the impermanency of life. What is this existence, he asks. It is not more than a momentary resting place during the course of an infinite journey. His thought here is much like that expressed in a Buddhist proverb which likens life to a short time passed at a wayside inn. The imagery is Oriental.

> 'Tis but a Tent where takes his one-day's rest
> A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;
> The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrásh
> Strikes, and prepares it for another guest.

"Ferrásh" is the chamberlain, the man who prepares the tent for the traveller each night, and strikes it (that is, removes and folds it up) in the morning. Again he compares life to the halt of a caravan for one moment at a desert well:

> A Moment's Halt,—a momentary taste
> Of Being from the Well amid the waste—
> And lo!—The phantom Caravan has reached
> The Nothing it set out from—Oh, make haste!
>
> Would you that spangle of Existence spend
> About the Secret—quick about it, Friend!
> A Hair perhaps divides the False and True,
> And upon what, prithee, does Life depend?
>
> A Hair perhaps divides the False and True:
> Yes; and a single Alif were the clue—
> Could you but find it—to the Treasure House
> And, peradventure, to the Master too;
>
> Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
> Running Quicksilver-like, eludes your pains;
> Taking all shapes from Máh [1] to Máhi; and
> They change and perish all—but He remains.

[1] Máh means fish, Máhi the moon.

Life is, he says, only like the waiting of travellers for one moment at an oasis in the desert to drink a little water. The desert is the unknown Infinite; the Well of Being at which we halt, is the present world into which we came out of mystery, out of nothingness. And we drink and pass on, and vanish back into the nothingness out of which we came. In the immeasurable darkness of mystery each life is but a tiny sparkle—the light upon a spangle; therefore what is the use of trying to find out the secret of things? The secret is infinite, while we are of a moment only; why waste that moment in trying to find out what we can not find out? You say that we should try to discover truth; but who knows what is truth? Very possibly the difference between the true and false may be no wider than the thickness of a hair, or the difference of a single letter; if you could just find out that one little difference (but you never can find out) then you might find yourself at once in heaven, or in the presence of the Supreme Being who made all secrets. But of Him you shall never in this life learn anything. Everywhere He is; everything is full of Him; but you can no more find Him than you can pick up a drop of quicksilver between your fingers. One thing only is sure; that He is all forms, all things from fish to moon; and that all these forms perish and disappear—though He himself remains eternally unchanged.

It is curious to observe how very closely the thought in this last verse resembles the teaching of Indian philosophy, but we have still more striking resemblances. An old Sanskrit poet compared the visible universe to a game of chess which God was playing with Himself, just for amusement. Omar expresses almost exactly the counterpart of this idea. The Deity, he tells us, is never seen—only guessed:

> A moment guessed—then back behind the Fold
> Immersed of Darkness round the Drama rolled
> Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
> He does himself contrive, enact, behold.

This is a simile of a puppet-show—also an Indian simile; the following lines are more imposing—

> We are no other than a moving row
> Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
> Round with this Sun-illumined Lantern held
> In Midnight by the Master of the Show;
>
> Impotent Pieces of the games He plays
> Upon this checkerboard of Nights and Days;
> Hither and thither moves, and checks and slays,
> And one by one back in the Closet lays.

I think the first of the above two stanzas is the grandest of all the quatrains. The sun is compared only to the light within a magic lantern, making visible the shadows of the universe that pass before our eyes; we ourselves also being of the shadows. But beyond and above and beneath all is midnight, the infinite darkness of infinite mystery. God is like the holder of the lantern; we know of his presence only as, in the dark room where a magic lantern exhibition is being given, we know the presence of the showman by the motion of the lights and shadows. But the other comparison is also extremely beautiful, with its suggestion of Time as a great chess board on which the black squares represent the nights, and the white squares the days.

Holding thus that we are but the figures with which the unknown Deity plays his game, the poet naturally asks, why trouble yourself about what is going to become of you? Can you prevent your fate? Certainly not. Then what is the use of fretting about it? You are only like a ball; the ball does not ask the player why he strikes it, why he throws it in one direction rather than in another.

> The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
> But Right or Left as strikes the player goes;
> And He that tossed you down into the field,
> He knows about it all—He knows—He knows!

Here the field means of course, the field of life, in which you are only the ball that God is playing with. You can not help your fate; praying is of no use.

> The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
> Moves on; nor all your piety nor Wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all your Tears wash out a word of it.

The Oriental sense of destiny as divine has never been more grandly expressed than in the above lines. But what about religious revelation, about heaven and hell, about future reward and punishment? On these subjects the poet openly expresses his utter disbelief. A future life? whoever came back from the dead? who knows anything about it? what are all the books that have been written about such things but utter nonsense—lies, the poet calls them.

> O threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise.
> One thing at least is certain,—*this* Life flies;
> One thing is certain, and the rest is Lies;
> The flower that once has blown forever dies.
>
> Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
> Before us passed the door of Darkness through
> Not one returns to tell us of the Road
> Which to discover we must travel too.
>
> The Revelations of Devout and Learned
> Who rose before us, and as Prophets burned,
> Are all but Stories, which, awoke from sleep,
> They told their fellows, and to sleep returned.
>
> I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
> Some letter of that Afterlife to spell,
> And by and by my Soul returned to me,
> And answered, "I myself am Heaven and Hell."
>
> Heaven but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
> And Hell the Shadow of a Soul on fire,
> Cast in the Darkness into which ourselves,
> So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

I think you will be struck by the resemblance of this old Persian poem to a proverb of your own, which declares that heaven and hell exist in the mind. Elsewhere Omar gives us the history of his own researches after truth; he speaks with open mockery—to him all philosophies are humbug, all dogmas absolute nonsense.

> Why, all the Saints and Sages who discust
> Of the two worlds so learnedly are thrust
> Like foolish Prophets forth; their words to scorn
> Are scattered, and their Mouths are stopped with Dust.
>
> Myself when young did eagerly frequent
> Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
> About it and about; but evermore
> Came out by the same door where in I went.
>
> With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
> And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
> And this was all the harvest that I reaped—
> I came like Water, and like Wind I go.
>
> Into this Universe, and Why not knowing,
> Nor Whence, like water willy-nilly flowing,
> And out of it, as Wind among the Waste,
> I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing.

When Nizám-ul-Mulk, the Prime Minister, was dying from the wounds received at the hand of an assassin, he repeated the lines of this last verse. All the problems of the universe are stated in it. An agnostic position, certainly; but not one irreconcilable with trust in the Infinite Power, as we shall see later on. The teaching is that no human mind ever can answer those three questions of the *Why*, the *Whence*, and the *Whither;* and that all study of the mystery is in vain. He himself had studied very hard, but all that he found out was that he came into the world like water, and that he must pass away from it like wind. And he tells us something more about his studies, for he does not want us to suppose that his disbelief is a disbelief

of ignorance. He had read the philosophy of all the schools and the sciences of the times,—astrology and medicine; he had studied the book of nature as well as the books of religion. But he had found nothing; the perpetual mystery remained.

> Up from Earth's Center through the Seventh Gate
> I rose, and on the throne of Saturn sate,
> And many a Knot unravelled by the Road;
> But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.
>
> There was the Door to which I found no key;
> There was the Veil through which I could not see;
> Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
> There was, and then no more of Thee and Me.
>
> Then of the Thee in Me who works behind
> The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
> A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard
> As from Without—"The Me within Thee blind!"

Strange as these ideas at first seem to the ordinary English reader, I imagine they must be familiar enough to you as students of Oriental philosophy. Omar means to tell us the course of his studies in a few words. The talk of "Me and Thee" means the discussion of the question of the soul; is there in each of us a personality distinguished from the Infinite, or is there not? Some told him there was both Objective and Subjective existence, others told him, with equal force of argument, that there was not. Some declared that there was personality; others told him that there was no such thing as personality, that there was One Infinite Being in all life. He would have thought no more of this Infinite within himself, when suddenly he seems to hear a voice crying to him "the I that is within thee can not see." Does not this come very close to the Buddhist teaching that the divine element in each of us can not see, can not know, until we have passed beyond the present imperfect state of existence? But it must also remind the western reader of a

strangely powerful comparison made by Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer remarked that the human consciousness can not see itself,—much for the same reason, that the point at which the nerve of sight enters the eye is blind.

Since all human effort to read the riddle of the universe is utterly vain, the poet says, "Let us at least be sensible enough to take the world as it is, to accept the beauty and the love and the pleasure Nature offers us, without troubling our minds concerning that which never can be known."

> Perplext no more with Human or Divine
> To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
> And lose your fingers in the tresses of
> The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

By "to-morrow's tangle" the poet means the enigma of the future; and he must not be taken too literally when he speaks of wine. Wine, rigidly forbidden by Mohammedan law, represents in these verses not merely the juice of the grape, but all the pleasures of sense,—the pleasures of this world. Among the Persians it is still very common to compare a graceful girl to a cypress tree, because of the tall and slender character of the tree; and girls, usually slaves, used to serve the guests with wine at Persian feasts. You will find many descriptions of such feasts in the "Arabian Nights." The girls often wore their hair loose-flowing. We may paraphrase the verse thus: "No longer perplext by the subject of what is human or what is divine, stop thinking about the mystery of the future life; feast, drink wine, and do not be afraid to stroke the hair of the beautiful girl that serves you."

> And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
> End in what ALL begins and ends in—yes;
> Think then you are TO-DAY what YESTERDAY
> You were—TO-MORROW you shall not be less.

It is quite true that beauty is fleeting, that nothing is permanent, that pleasure quickly fades. So does Life. When

somebody tells you that life begins and ends in nothing, then answer him that since this be so, you are now only what you have been before in the past, and that you can not be anything less than that in the future. There is a cynical bit of logic here. If everything be only illusion, then what difference does it make whether we like the illusion or dislike it, whether we accept it with joy, or shun it with horror, whether we are very virtuous, or very much the reverse,—what does it matter in the Eternal order of things? To refuse pleasure in this life merely because you are in doubt about the future life—what could be more foolish! No, think of life itself as of the cup of wine offered you to drink; life is given you for gladness, for joy, not for tears and fears and doubts. Drink it as you would drink wine at a banquet; by enjoying life you will better be able, when the time comes, to face death cheerfully. Trust in the certainty that you never can have been anything less than you are now, and that in the future you can not be less than you were in the past.

> So when the Angel of the darker Drink
> At last shall find you by the river-brink,
> And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
> Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

"The Angel of the Darker Drink" means the angel of death—Azrael; and the river-brink means the extreme verge of the river of life. A little further on there is a mocking but very grand comparison of the lives of men to bubbles or foam upon the surface of wine—shall we say the Wine of the Universal Life?

> And fear not lest Existence closing your
> Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
> The Eternal Sáki from that Bowl has poured
> Millions of bubbles like us, and will pour.

By the word "Sáki" understand the wine bearer, the girl or boy who serves the wine at banquets. This is a very dar-

ing comparison, but it is certainly a very fine one—God pouring out the wine of life, whose bubbles are the souls of men. While the wine lasts there will always be bubbles; while the substance of Being lasts, there will always be joy and pain. Death and birth are not really very important, nor perhaps even very different; there is nothing to be frightened about. We should be generous to ourselves and to others in this world, even as the rose is.

> Look to the blowing Rose about us, "Lo,
> Laughing," she says, "into the World I blow,
> At once the silken tassel of my purse
> Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

That is, the rose says, "Look at me, see how generous I am! I come into the world smiling, and at once I open my purse, and scatter my treasure upon the ground." The reference, of course, is to the quick fading and falling of the perfumed petals. As for the ascetic or the libertine, the end is very much the same. A man may be foolish in either direction, too self-repressed or too self-indulgent. Either extreme is folly; life is a precious gift, a gift of joy which we should use.

> And those who husbanded the Golden Grain,
> And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
> Alike to no such aureate Earth are turned
> As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

Paraphrase thus: the men who carefully stored up, like misers, the treasure of life instead of spending it, and the men who wasted it as spendthrifts spend their patrimony,—what has become of them? Both of them have been turned back into clay, into earth; and there is no difference between the dust of the one, and of the other. Enough to say that the clay is not gold, and that nobody would like to see it dug up again.

The worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

That is to say, whether ambitions succeed or fail, whether we are fortunate or unfortunate to-day, the end is the same for all; everything is like snow that sometimes falls in the desert, only to vanish at once under the heat of the sun. Yet this is not a real consolation; we can not help regretting the impermanency of things—

Yet, Ah! That Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

There is a reference here to the Oriental custom of perfuming beautiful manuscripts with musk. Youth is compared to such a manuscript—too quickly fastened up with regret, the poet says; we would not have things so, if we and the Deity could have the chance of making the universe over again.

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire,
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

Even the sight of the moon above the garden makes the poet sad; and he expresses his emotion somewhat as more than one Japanese poet has done in the past.

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

This is the regret of the old man who knows that he can not live very long. But he is at least consoled in heart

by the consciousness that he has enjoyed his life, and has drunk all the wine that he could. This is his last recommendation or prayer to the wine-server, that cypress-slender maiden elsewhere mentioned.

> And when, like her, oh Sáki, you shall pass
> Among the guests star-scattered on the grass,
> And in your blissful errand reach the spot
> Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

Persian poets often compare a beautiful woman to the moon—especially to a new moon. The meaning, paraphrased, is: "Fair maid, when you, at some future time after I am dead, pass among the guests seated in the garden, even as the moon passes among the ranks of the stars, then, when you come to the place where I used always to sit, remember me, and turn a cup down upon this spot in memory of me."

The extracts which I have given represent the greater proportion of the famous quatrains in the book. There are altogether one hundred and one. Some of these, being only logical or argumentative, I have not quoted; others are so full of Oriental allusions that the beauty of them would require a great deal of explanation. But I think you will now see the general idea of these poems, and the general purpose of the poet. The question remains, what is the value of his philosophy?—or can we call it really a philosophy? That it must have some value is evident from the fact that Omar has been admired for eight or nine hundred years in the Orient, and that even to-day in England he has begun to captivate the public in quite a strange and startling way. Every year new editions of Fitzgerald's translation are published, and these editions have been produced in shapes ranging in value from about one yen to two hundred. A variorum edition of the poems has just been published this year, and the religious folk have been somewhat angry at this sudden popularity of Omar Khayyám,—the

"large infidel," as Tennyson called him. Certainly the infidelity, from a Christian point of view, is quite large. But as a matter of fact, Omar Khayyám must not be taken too seriously. We must regard him as an exquisite poet who attempted to express only one view of life in strong opposition to the fanaticism and hypocrisy of the age in which he lived. He preached a kind of Epicureanism and a kind of Pantheism—both of which we may consider to be perfectly true so far as they go. But no one system contains the whole truth. There is a beautiful story to illustrate this, which I will now tell you.

I suppose you know something about a scientific experiment, by which the relations of colour to light are made manifest. A large or small disk of cardboard or other material is painted with the different colours of the spectrum —red, yellow, green, blue, violet. When this disk is turned round slowly, you see all the colours. But when it is turned very quickly, the colours become invisible, and the disk appears to be perfectly white. Having reminded you of this experiment, let me now relate the story.

It is told by Anatole France, the greatest living French man of letters, in a charming book called "Le Puits de Sainte Claire." A holy monk asked the spirit of Evil one day what he thought of Truth. The Devil answered, "Truth is white." Then the holy monk was greatly delighted because the Devil had said that truth was white. But presently the Devil laughed, and continued: "I said that Truth is white; but I did not mean that Truth is pure and spotless. You think that white means pure, stainless, perfect. But now I am going to show you that it does not mean anything of the kind."

Then the Devil made to appear before the eyes of the monk an immense disk, or wheel, upon which thousands and thousands of images were painted, in all possible colours. And each of these images represented a religion, or a philosophy; and each figure carried a little flag, bearing

an inscription. One inscription read, "There is only one God." Another read, "There are many millions of Gods." Another inscription declared, "Man is immortal." And yet another declared, "Only the gods are immortal." And all these thousands of inscriptions contradicted one another, in the most extraordinary way. Then, while the monk was wondering at the spectacle, the Spirit suddenly set the wheel turning—swiftly and still more swiftly, until the sound of it became like a roar of thunder. Forthwith, all the colours vanished, and the disk was white, like the face of the moon; and the Spirit said laughing, "That is Truth—you see that it is white."

CHAPTER XXII

PESSIMISTS AND THEIR KINDRED

Not because he takes the first rank but because his *nom-de-plume* of Meredith brings him into startling contrast with George Meredith, we may first consider the work of the younger Bulwer Lytton. He was born in 1831, the son of the great novelist, Sir Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer Lytton. Robert Bulwer Lytton inherited something of his father's talent, but never had much opportunity to develop his powers along the direction in which they really existed. His father wanted very much to be a poet and could not—grew jealous of Tennyson, and wrote satirically upon Tennyson's poetry. Tennyson was the most magnanimous of men, but he was a very dangerous person to make angry, and he replied to this outburst of jealousy with ten or fifteen lines of terrible satire which crushed Bulwer Lytton forever, and makes his memory ridiculous even to this day. Perhaps the longing of the father to become a poet was inherited by the son. At all events he began at a rather early date to publish poetry over the signature of Owen Meredith. On the whole he must be considered to have succeeded amazingly well in some small departments of verse, and to have failed whenever he attempted anything large. He tried to follow even the subjects of Tennyson, attempted to treat the same thing in another way. Here his work is simply worthless. Then he attempted a kind of novel in poetry called "Lucile." It was modelled after a French story, and caused him to be accused of plagiarism. Nevertheless, it was very popular for a short time—partly because it was of the mediocrity which met the demand of a large mass of middle-class readers, and partly because of

the social position of its author. But it is quite unnecessary to do more than mention this work. Robert Lytton became a real poet only in small things.

The reason of this may partly be sought in the busy life of the man. A letter from the elder Bulwer Lytton has been recently published which enables us to understand how the whole course of the son's career had been mapped out for him beforehand. In this letter the novelist said that, as he desired that his son Robert should enter the field of diplomacy, it was necessary that the young man should learn to speak and write French not only well but exactly like a Frenchman. And Robert Bulwer Lytton was thoroughly educated in the diplomatic service in just the manner that the father desired. The influence of his French education is distinctly visible in the best of his work. It gives you an impression at times of the exquisite and matchless quality of Theophile Gautier—not that he was really able to compare with Gautier to the extent of a single stanza, but the sense of Gautier is there—the sense of form and the sense of melody without the splendid colour and without that incomparable delicacy of choice of words which can not be repeated in any other modern language. The diplomatic service, besides, was not a service leaving a man much leisure time for the development of poetic talent. Robert Bulwer Lytton's very aptitude for diplomacy evidences qualities of mind at variance with the true poetic spirit. He began as a diplomatic attaché at Washington; then he went in a higher capacity to Paris; then to Berlin; then to Rome; subsequently to every capital in Europe. In the English civil service a man who has fair talent has a chance of seeing the whole world, and Owen Meredith saw a great deal of it. He was made Viceroy of India in 1876—the highest post, perhaps, in the gift of the English government. He died in 1891.

You can easily imagine that he had little time for poetry, and the most generous way of considering his work is to

remember that it is rather wonderful considering the circumstances. The best of it is, I think, to be found in the fourth division of his collected works, under the title of "Exile," by which we are to understand poems written in strange lands far away from home. The best of these again include little more than half a dozen pieces in quatrain. I should select the pieces entitled "Resurrection," "The Portrait," "Bluebeard," "The Castle of King Macbeth," and perhaps "Two out of the Crowd" (a subject, by the way, which has been infinitely better treated by Robert Browning). Now it is just in this work that the French influence before referred to is manifested. The whole feeling, the whole tone, is not English; it is not even in the largest meaning of the word French—it is Parisian. There is a cynical mockery, a refined sensuousness and an ethical insincerity about it which is exactly in the manner of the conversations uttered by the most unpleasant characters in Balzac. There is nothing noble, nothing great, but there is very much of what is false, and very much of what we call *blasé*. It is the poetry also of a purely artificial world—the world of fashion and convention, not by sunlight but by lamplight, gaslight or electric light. The beauty of the thing is that it reflects quite well the character of that life and its impression upon even an English mind. Take the poem, for example, called "Resurrection." It is nothing more than the morbid fancy of a gentleman in a theatre. But the whole impression of an opera-night is wonderfully given, and some of the stanzas have become famous the world over.

> Of all the operas that Verdi wrote,
> The best, to my taste, is the Trovatore,
> And Mario can soothe with a tenor note
> The souls in Purgatory!

As he stands in the theatre he thinks with regret of a woman to whom he has been engaged to be married, but who died the year before. He thinks of her grace. He sees

her again in memory, fair and young, as in life, wearing upon her breast a jasmine blossom, and suddenly he smells the scent of a jasmine blossom in the theatre.

> It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,
> It made me creep, and it made me cold,
> Like the scent that steals from the crumbling sheet
> Where a mummy is half unrolled.

Because it is a ghostly flower that he smells, not a real one, perhaps. But looking across the theatre he finds that his longing has made it a real one. His dead love has returned from the grave; she is sitting there in the theatre waiting for him to speak to her. Now of course this incident is impossible—touches upon the absurd; but remark that the author does not intend otherwise. It is a romantic irony, as much as to say to the reader, "This is what you would like, is it not?" It is the ironical insincerity of the poem that gives it a peculiar, bitter charm.

A more striking example of this queer power—indeed, the most representative of all the writer's work—is "The Portrait," a poem learned by heart and often recited at literary gatherings, in different parts of the English-speaking world. It is the best known of all Owen Meredith's compositions, and it is most typical of the influences that shaped his style and of the cynical spirit that informs his very best work.

> Midnight past! Not a sound of aught
> Through the desolate house, but the wind at his prayers;
> I sat by the dying fire, and thought
> Of the dear dead woman upstairs.
>
> A night of tears! For the gusty rain
> Had ceased, but the eaves were dripping yet;
> And the moon looked forth as though in pain,
> With her face all white and wet.
>
> Nobody with me, my watch to keep,
> But the friend of my bosom, the man I love,
> And grief had sent him fast to sleep
> In the chamber up above.

Nobody else, in the country place
All round, that knew of my loss beside,
But the good young priest with the Raphael face
Who was with her when she died.

That good young priest is of gentle nerve,
And my grief had moved him beyond control;
For his lips grew white, as I could observe,
When he speeded her parting soul.

I sat by the dreary hearth alone;
I thought of the pleasant days of yore;
I said "The staff of my life is gone;
The woman I love is no more.

"Gem-clasped, on her bosom my portrait lies,
Which next to her heart she used to wear—
It is steeped in the light of her loving eyes
And the sweets of her bosom and hair."

And I said—"The thing is precious to me;
They will bury her soon in the churchyard clay;
It lies on her heart, and lost must be,
If I do not take it away."

I lighted my lamp at the dying flame,
And crept up the stairs that creaked for fright,
Till into the chamber of death I came,
Where she lay all in white.

The moon shone over her winding-sheet,
There, stark she lay on her carven bed;
Seven burning tapers about her feet,
And seven about her head.

As I stretched my hand, I drew my breath;
I turned, as I drew the curtains apart;
I dared not look on the face of death;
I knew where to find her heart.

I thought at first, as my touch fell there,
It had warmed that heart to life, with love;
For the thing I touched was warm, I swear,
And I could feel it move.

'Twas the hand of a man, that was moving slow
O'er the heart of the dead,—from the other side;
And at once the sweat broke over my brow,
"Who is robbing the corpse?" I cried.

Opposite me, by the taper's light,
The friend of my bosom, the man I loved,
Stood over the corpse, and all as white;—
And neither of us moved.

"What do you here, my friend?" The man
Looked first at me, and then at the dead.
"There is a portrait here"—he began.
"There is. It is mine," I said.

Said the friend of my bosom, "Yours, no doubt,
The portrait was till a month ago,
When this suffering angel took that out,
And placed mine there, I know."

"This woman loved me well," said I.
"A month ago," said my friend to me:
And "In your throat," I groaned, "you lie!"
He answered, "Let us see."

"Enough!" I returned, "let the dead decide;
And whosesoever the portrait prove,
His shall it be, when the cause is tried,
Where Death is arraigned by love."

We found the portrait there, in its place:
We opened it by the taper's shine;
The gems were all unchanged; the face
Was—neither his nor mine.

"One nail drives out another, at least!
The portrait is not ours," I cried—
"But our friend's, the Raphael-faced young priest,
Who confessed her when she died."

Here we have a really terrible piece of irony, of mockery, which can not be called in the least exaggerated if we consider that the facts related are no more strange to real life

than thousands of incidents which form a part of ordinary French fiction. The story is French in character, the whole management of the poem is foreign—and perhaps for that very reason it is a rare and wonderful composition. But it is certainly of the most morbid class. As a satire upon friendship, upon love, and upon religion, it would be scarcely possible to point out in English literature anything of equal dimensions to be compared with it. What is absolutely real about it is its artificially *blasé* tone. When we say that a man or a composition is *blasé*, we mean in the case of a man that he is no longer capable of innocent or honest pleasure, because he is exhausted by vicious pleasures, and that he has no more faith in human nature because he has had bitter experiences in the society to which he belonged; while, as for the composition, we mean that it reflects the cynicism and scepticism of the *blasé* mind. It would not be just to call the author of this poem personally *blasé*, but a great deal of his work betrays certain tendencies in this direction, certain sympathies and comprehensions of a decidedly pessimistic kind. Besides, it is just in such things that he is really at his best. When he attempts philosophical or narrative poems, he is never quite himself, and never much above mediocrity. Another reason why I should classify him with the pessimistic poets is his decided partiality for tragic and horrible subjects, which he treats apparently with a certain pleasure of detail, and an utter absence of moral feeling. The other Meredith, of whom I have spoken, does indeed treat of many very horrible tragedies; but he only does so to point a moral, and that with a skill and a wisdom in which he has no rival. You need not look for any moral teaching worthy of the name in the work of Owen Meredith.

I have given only one strong example of his power; but I must mention that the volume of his work is very large. What will be preserved of it in future English literature will just as certainly be very small. All that it contains, really precious, might be condensed into a selection of perhaps two

hundred pages at most. Yet there are few kinds of poetical composition which he did not attempt. He imitated Greek tragedies, composed dramas, successfully copied various French forms, wrote novels in verse, imitated the manner of nearly all Victorian masters, especially Tennyson, and even allowed himself to be fascinated by Oriental romance. However, I can find but one other poem out of the classes already referred to which I could call remarkable, an Oriental fable adapted from the Persian, and entitled "The Apple of Life." Yet even in this poem, there are traces of the same spirit which "The Portrait" illustrates. Altogether, Owen Meredith is far less successful in his treatment of Oriental subjects than Sir Edwin Arnold. Arnold can not be classed as a poet of the highest rank; but he has a wealth of human sympathy, generous enthusiasm, and a particular skill in the expression of tenderness, which Owen Meredith never had. Indeed, in regard to Oriental subjects, I doubt whether nineteenth century English literature has anything really wonderful to show except Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyám. This magnificent verse has already become an English classic.

James Thomson, the second poet of this name in English literature, I shall next invite your attention to—as the most typical of all the pessimistic group. In the other poets of this company you will find many lights among the shadows; but there is no ray of light in the sinister poetry of Thomson. Many lecturers on English literature would at this day refuse to consider him in a university lecture; but he has fairly forced his way in the face of all obstacles to a very high place among the minor poets. His merits have been fairly acknowledged by our highest judges; his name is already inscribed in the history of the Victorian period; and I do not see any reason to be silent about him merely because he represents the blackest quality of despair. The province of poetry is the reflection of all human forms of thought and feeling, the dark as well as the bright; and

the dark is certainly not without moral value as well as intrinsic interest. We must attempt to draw the proper lesson which such poetry as Thomson's must suggest to the student of ethics.

The history of this man is very strange and very unhappy. He was the son of a sailor, and was born in 1834. His father and family were of course very poor, and their poverty was increased by the father's tendency to drink. The boy James proved to be naturally clever, and he was admitted, at the recommendation of some charitable person, into a Scotch charity school, where the sons of soldiers and sailors are educated at the public expense. There he received a common matter-of-fact education, and after leaving the school he was allowed to enter the army as an army schoolmaster. His poetical education was made entirely by his own reading and study; and he disliked the work of teaching soldiers largely because it allowed of little opportunity for self-culture. While he was serving in the army, he made an acquaintance which was destined to have a great influence upon his life. This acquaintance was Charles Bradlaugh, afterwards a member of Parliament, a radical leader, and a professed atheist. You may remember that Bradlaugh refused to take the oath which all members of Parliament were expected to take, with the exception of Quakers, and that he wasted much splendid talent and courage and eloquence in vainly endeavouring to break down the barriers of English conservatism in social and religious matters. Charles Bradlaugh was serving as a soldier in the same region where Thomson was working as schoolmaster. The two became great friends, and Thomson was soon converted to many of Bradlaugh's radical opinions. In 1862 Thomson was dismissed from the army for breaking the rules regarding swimming in a certain lake, or at least for refusing to answer questions put to him in regard to his conduct. He had no money, and no friend except Bradlaugh, who had left the army and had begun his career as a politician.

Bradlaugh was generous to Thomson, took him to his own house, obtained several situations for him and helped him as long as he lived. But Thomson was not destined to profit much by anybody's help. He became a prey like his father to drink. The last years of his life were devoted chiefly to journalistic work; but his habits rendered it impossible for him to obtain any great position even in the newspaper world. Yet by his poems he made friends who would have been only too happy to help him had it been possible. The great novelist and poet Charles Kingsley, the historian Froude, the great novelist George Eliot, the poet Marston, and William Rossetti, brother of Dante Rossetti, all extended to him their sympathy and offers of good will. But there was no hope for Thomson. He burst a blood vessel at last after a drinking spell, and died in a public hospital in 1882.

You can readily see that Thomson's experience of life was not such as to give him cheerful ideas; and his acquaintance with Bradlaugh was not in all respects fortunate for him. We have here the case of a young man of extraordinary talent, feeling his own intellectual superiority to the people whom he was obliged to serve and obey, and refusing all opportunity to better himself, merely because of the conditions into which he had been born. Intellectual men in such a state are apt to be dangerous both to themselves and to society. A man in this position has two roads open to him—only two roads, and he must quickly choose between them. The first road to success is to be gained by bravely defying society and fighting one's way through to the top. But it requires both immense talent and immense moral strength to do this; and even Bradlaugh, a much more gifted man than Thomson, died in attempting it. Byron and Shelley were examples of poets who tried it and failed. The other road to success requires a very special form of diplomatic character. The man who understands exactly the range of his own power and the machinery of society,

may rise by throwing all his strength upon the side of the very prejudices that crush him. Once at the top he may assert his independence, and society will forgive him for his cleverness in having at once deceived and beguiled it; but this type of man seldom belongs to the emotional world of the poets. The man of this kind generally wins his way through politics or some kindred field of competition. In the case of Thomson it must also be remembered that he did many things which he was not strong enough to do. The man who attacks the religious ideas of his time may be quite right from his own standpoint, but he is undertaking a dangerous business if he is poor and friendless. Society then unites her powers for the simple purpose of starving him to death. Nobody will employ him; no publisher will print him; no genteel association will admit him. He becomes an outcast. In the case of a man like Professor Huxley, the situation becomes different. Society is broken down by the enormous force of the intellect she tries in vain to crush; and then recognizing that the fight is too much for her, society accepts him and makes him her friend and perhaps buries him at last in Westminster Abbey. But only a giant can win the victory; and society only forgives giants. It does not forgive Thomson.

I have spoken thus at length about Thomson's circumstances in order that we may better understand his manner of regarding life. He was unfortunate, first in the position which his poverty obliged him to accept; secondly in his lack of higher education; thirdly in his antagonism to social conventions; and last, as well as worst, in his inherited passion for drink. Understanding these facts, we can understand the rest.

It was by small pieces of verse, showing great talent, that Thomson at first attracted the attention of Froude and of Kingsley; but it was not by these that he will live in literature. Only one of his compositions can be termed really great; but it is very great, the greatest thing of the kind in

English verse. I mean his long poem entitled "The City of Dreadful Night." There is also a remarkable and very horrible poem called "Insomnia," which emotionally and imaginatively surpasses a poem by Coleridge upon the same subject, though perhaps considerably inferior to the work of Coleridge as to certain excellences of form. "Insomnia" is a wonderfully hideous thing, but I do not think that it could be called great. "The City of Dreadful Night," however, is very great; and the surprise of the work is that a man who never had any real literary training could have composed it. Some of its stanzas are absolutely grand, and the whole composition is masterly. There is a gloomy beauty and a strange preciousness about it, which makes you think of some solid and ponderous object of polished ebony.

"The City of Dreadful Night" represents what? An imaginary city, in one respect; a real city in another—Life, as Thomson may have felt it, without money and without friends, in the awful and roaring solitude of London. London is a terrible place for the unfortunate, perhaps the most terrible in the world, and even for the fortunate it is the gloomiest of all modern cities. Sometimes for months together the sun is never seen; sometimes for days and weeks together there is not even daylight; at noon the electric lamps and the gas lamps alone give light to the streets; a dense and evil smelling fog darkens all distances; traffic moves slowly and cautiously; everything appears infernal, gloomy, like a bad dream. We all know what London calls "pea-soup fog." Probably this London fog may have suggested to Thomson his first idea of the poem, the idea of a city of toil and misery and despair upon which the sun never shines. But as it now stands, the poem represents much more than a city; it is a picture of humanity in the condition of absolute despair—humanity in a world circling blindly round a burnt out sun, living without hope and without faith. And in another sense we must take the poem as presenting us with a picture of the poet's own soul.

"The City of Dreadful Night" is far away from all other places; it is surrounded on three sides by horrible deserts, and on the fourth side is the sea, a black sea over which no ship ever comes. Nobody wants to live in that horrible place, but no one can leave it, except by committing suicide; and nobody knows why he is there or how he came there. It is scarcely necessary to tell you that Life is what the poet refers to in these lines:

> How he arrives there none can clearly know;
> Athwart the mountains and immense wild tracts,
> Or flung a waif upon the vast sea-flow,
> Or down the river's boiling cataracts;—
> To reach it is as dying fever-stricken;
> To leave it, slow faint birth intense pangs quicken;
> And the memory swoons in both the tragic acts.

There follows a number of terrible descriptions of the different varieties of despair in the City of Dreadful Night —the loss of hope, love, and faith. So horrible is existence, that the great fear from which all the people suffer is not the fear of pain or of dying, but the fear that after death there might be another life. Being disgusted with life, all men desire nothing better than annihilation. To the cathedral sometimes the people go to hear a preacher; but the preacher has no word of joy or comfort for them. He tells them that there is no God, no soul, no future life, and that whoever wishes to have no more pain or trouble, can get his wish by suicide. I give a verse or two from the words of the preacher—

> This little life is all we must endure,
> The grave's most holy peace is ever sure,
> We fall asleep and never awake again;
> Nothing is of us but the mouldering flesh,
> Whose elements dissolve and merge afresh
> In earth, air, water, plants, and other men.

There is, however, a very great splendour in this despair— splendour of imagination and of style. The grandest parts

of the poem are perhaps the last stanzas, in which the goddess of the city, Melancholy herself, is described. The imagery here becomes colossal, and no one could deny its magnificence.

As Thomson wrote but one poem of remarkable importance, we have given him rather more attention than the proportion to be observed in this lecture would allow, were it not that he represents a certain phase of the free-thought movement in poetry to which we shall have again to refer more than once. I shall now speak of John Addington Symonds, who must certainly be reckoned as one of the pessimistic poets. Indeed, I judge him to be scarcely less of a pessimist than Thomson, although his pessimism was of a different kind and was due to a very different circumstance. Symonds was the son of a celebrated physician of the city of Bristol, and was born in 1840. Inheriting considerable money, he never knew the struggles and hardships that commonly fall to the lot of literary men; he was educated at the best universities, and became a great scholar; he travelled extensively and successfully cultivated a natural taste for art. Young, rich, accomplished, a real man of learning, and a *dilettante* of no common order, the future seemed to be very bright for him. But unfortunately he had inherited the seeds of consumption. In the prime of his life the disease took such a form that he was able to live only by making his home in the mountains of Switzerland, at a great elevation, where the air was extremely pure. To this mountain home he carried his books—books in all languages, collected at great expense, and representing a small fortune in themselves. The rest of his existence was altogether devoted to study and writing. He was a voluminous writer, and a critic of wide reputation. His greatest work, so far as bulk goes, is his history of the Italian Renaissance; but, although a work of great special value, it does not represent his best efforts. Those were put into such books as his "Studies of the Greek Poets," and his "Sketches and Studies

in Italy and Greece." We have now to consider only his poetry. I mean his original poetry; for he was an extensive and very successful translator. Some of his translations from the Greek Anthology are really the best of their kind, and great praise must be also given to his charming little book "Wine, Women, and Song," a translation of the student songs of the Middle Ages. But his own poetry belongs to quite another category. There is not much of it, and the best is contained in a thin book called "Vagabunduli Libellus"—which means the little book of the little wanderer. No more dismal collection of poems than this exists perhaps in English literature. The contents are nearly all sonnets upon his own experiences, and the general tone of this introspective work gives one a very unpleasant feeling. The verse is polished, scholarly, brilliant; but the sentiment is morbid to a degree that even the sickness of the author can scarcely excuse. There are two disagreeable elements, both of them totally different from the honest despair and the amorous passions of Thomson. Here we have a great scholar, a man of wealth and high position, apparently relating to us personal experiences of passion which belong to the extremely unhealthy variety, or again expressing to us the perpetual horror of death which haunts him and fills him with a vastness of despair such as only the intellectual mind can feel. The sonnet called "Pessimism" well deserves its name. I may cite it simply as a unique production of this class.

> There is a doubt drearier than any deep
> Thought's plummet ever sounded, that our earth—
> This earth where each man bears the load of birth,
> The load of death, uncertain whether sleep
> Shall round life with oblivion—may be worth
> Less in the scale of being than a heap
> Of mildewed ears the farmer scorns to reap,
> Or garners in his barns with sorry mirth.
> Of every million lives, how many a score
> Are failures from their birth! If this be true

Of seeds, men, species, why not then of suns?
Our world perchance is worm-gnawn at the core!
Or in its dædal frame doth cancer brew
Venomous juice that blent with life-blood runs.

When a man has these imaginations regarding the universe; when he can seriously compare the bright sun and the beautiful world to rotten apples, and speak of all life as failure, we may expect him to have some extraordinary ideas about the soul. And so he has. Death would be a good thing if the soul also die—but he is afraid that it does not die!

The curse of this existence, whence it came
We view not; only this we view, that naught
Shall free man from self's robe of sentient flame.
There is no cunningest way to murder thought.
Stab, poison, strangle; yea, the flesh hath died!
What further skill yields souls their suicide?

One feels tempted to reply to such a question that the best way to destroy one's soul—I use the word soul in the meaning of the higher life of the human being—is to waste time in the composition of such verses. The indulgence of such morbid fancies on the part of a man in the position of Symonds can not but seem to us infinitely worse than the pessimism of Thomson. The Self, the Ego, is a source of constant trouble to this poet; and his very best piece is upon the puzzle which torments him. At some time or other, as his poems confess, he was fascinated by some beautiful Italian, and the subject of the poem is the pain which he felt at his inability to obtain her inner as well as her outer self. This feeling regarding the mystery of another human life has been scarcely ever expressed in a morbid way by an English poet; but it has been a favourite theme with some French writers of the *decadence*, and the great story-teller Maupassant was haunted by it, as I said, shortly before he became mad.

At a certain time of life every man makes one important discovery, that no being can ever perfectly know the whole

character, the whole thought and the whole feeling of another being. There is no exception to this rule; even the son can not know the whole soul of his father, nor the husband that of his wife. Now to the thinker of the Far East or of India, this mystery gives no trouble at all. The eastern philosophers know perfectly well that the inner life of every being reaches back into the infinite, is a part of the infinite; and that an attempt to measure it would be like an attempt to measure the abysses of space. Only in our own day certain western psychologists of note have been studying the Ego or Self as an infinitely complex fact, and, as I told you, have formulated, in accordance with evolutional science, the hypothesis of what is called Multiple Personality. Each person really represents, by heredity, and according to circumstances, an innumerable multitude of other personalities. But to the old western idea of the singleness of self, this discovery of changing personality, of alternating personality, of unfathomable personality, came like a shock, almost like a terror. It is this terror that is expressed in the best of all the sonnets of Symonds, which is number twenty-two in the collection called "Stella Maris." I shall quote only the last four lines:

> Self gives not self; and souls sequestered dwell
> In the dark fortalice of thought and sense,
> Where, though life's prisoners call from cell to cell,
> Each pines alone, and may not issue thence.

To a joyous and healthy mind like that of George Meredith, the infinite mystery of self is a delight, a subject of happy wonder, and a constant assurance of the eternity of all that is good and beautiful in the highest life of the spirit. But to a morbid mind, the first shock of this fact brings only strange suspicions and strange despairs. There is not much chance that the poetry of Symonds will live as a whole. Its unhealthiness is not sufficiently counterbalanced by those qualities of deep thought and emotion which may redeem

even pessimistic poetry of the blackest description. But one or two pieces in the collection—such as have been already selected for anthologies—will probably take their place in English literature.

Arthur Hugh Clough must also be called a rather pessimistic poet; but he certainly deserves considerable attention both as a verse maker and as a personality. He was born in 1819, was educated in Oxford, where he obtained a fellowship, and later in life became an official of the Educational Department—a position which he kept until his death in 1861. It may be of some interest to add that his childhood was passed in America, and that his death occurred at Florence in Italy.

Clough appears to have been much affected by what was called the Oxford movement. I can not tell you much about that movement in this relation; you will find the best account of it, perhaps, in Froude's "Short Studies on Great Subjects." Suffice it to say for the present that the Oxford movement was a religious movement in the direction exactly opposite to that which the great protestant reformation had taken. It was a movement of such a kind as to excite the fancy that the Roman and English churches might again become one. Not a few of the clever students actually became Roman Catholics—such as Newman. This was the movement proper. But, like every extreme movement, it provoked a reaction in the university; and while one set of men were allowing themselves to fall into the current of religious enthusiasm, another set of men proclaimed, as far as they dared, absolute disbelief in all forms of religion. Between these extremes of scepticism and of zeal there grew up a small class which attempted to preserve a balance between the denial of one party and the dogmatism of the other. Clough was one of these. It has been said of him that he neither had courage to doubt nor faith to believe; but this seems to be an unjust observation. He was a doubter, and expressed his doubts in some of the boldest

satirical verse of his time; but he was not so small a thinker as to preach either despair or any purely materialistic doctrine. In many respects he was very much the same kind of man as Matthew Arnold—liberal in some things, small in certain matters, but never common and never undignified. Some years ago his poems obtained great circulation and reputation, probably through the influence of the author's friends with the universities. They were recommended as expressing the thought of the century—by which was really meant that they expressed the thought of a particular party related to the Oxford movement. So far as the thought of the century goes, they do not express anything worth speaking of; there is no more nineteenth century philosophy in them than there is in the poems of Matthew Arnold. But now that the feeling of the time which they once represented has passed away, Clough's poems run the danger of becoming forgotten even within the present generation. The interest in what they expressed is dead. Much larger thinkers than either Clough or Arnold are absorbing attention; but Clough was a scholar, a fair thinker, for the time in which he lived, and he wrote a great deal of verse, none of which is absolutely bad—some of which is very good indeed. It can not be said that he wrote anything great; but some of his shorter and simpler pieces have a gentle merit that may enable them to survive. The pieces most commonly praised are his "Qua Cursum Ventus," "In the Great Metropolis," and "Say not the struggle nought availeth." All of these are short and simple, but he wrote many long poems, in hexameters and in other metres. Like Longfellow, he also made a collection of little stories in verse like the "Canterbury Tales" of Chaucer. His idea was to recount the different stories told to one another by passengers upon a steamship crossing the Atlantic, and he gave to this collection the title "Mari Magno, or Tales on Board." There are six of these little tales; and they seem to me to represent in their sincere simplicity his best work as a narrator. Many prefer

his "Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich," which is written in hexameters, after the style of Longfellow's "Evangeline," but quite different in tone. It is the story of a young Oxford student falling in love with a Highland girl, whom he marries at last and takes with him to New Zealand. It is a very clever production, but not one which I could recommend for you to study, as it swarms with curious idioms, largely borrowed from university life, besides containing many Highland expressions. Moreover it is not in the nature of serious art; it presents a strange mixture of the jesting and the romantic spirit. From Clough I shall quote one very short piece only, not because of its poetry but because of its witty satire, and because it has become famous, so that you are likely often to see it referred to. It mocks the professed morality of English society, bitterly expressing what the real worldly idea of morality is.

THE LATEST DECALOGUE

Thou shalt have one God only,—who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshipped, except the currency:
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse,
Thine enemy is none the worse:
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend:
Honour thy parents; that is, all
From whom advancement may befall;
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive
Officiously to keep alive:
Do no adultery commit;
Advantage rarely comes of it:
Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,
When it's so lucrative to cheat:
Bear not false witness; let the lie
Have time on its own wings to fly:
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

Matthew Arnold, the dear friend of Clough, was born in 1822. He was the eldest son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous head master of Rugby School, immortalised in Hughes's book, "Tom Brown's School Days." The picture drawn in the book of Dr. Arnold is said to be absolutely true by those who knew this celebrated educator. Dr. Arnold was an independent thinker,—he broke away from old traditions, and established a new system of character training which proved tolerably successful. The independent spirit of the father seems to have been inherited by the son; but it took quite a different form in Matthew, who was not less gentle and sensitive than his father was stern and forceful. Matthew was educated at Oxford, and early distinguished himself in his studies. He won a prize for poetry with his poem on Cromwell, when he was only twenty-one years old. Between 1857 and 1867 he was professor of poetry at Oxford. When nearing middle age he greatly distinguished himself by a series of essays on literary subjects, which won for him a great reputation as critic, and brought degrees from three different universities. As a critic he was certainly during his lifetime the first of his period. His poetry does not, however, give him a rank in verse equal to that which has been accorded him in prose.

Perhaps you have read his strange remarks about Tennyson—his complaint (published only since his death) that Tennyson was not a great thinker or a profound poet. Now this criticism can scarcely be applied to Tennyson, but it is eminently true of the man that made it. The mind of Arnold had been perturbed at an early day by the Oxford movement; he had drifted toward agnosticism without ever daring to make the full plunge, and he was never able during his life to take a really definite position on ultimate subjects. He felt and was tormented by the doubts of his time. He was sensitive, and suffered much from the pressure of

life. He loved beauty and truth for their own sake, and found himself everywhere confronted by a narrow and vulgar conservatism that imposed restrictions upon thought, and refused all privileges to opinions at variance with its own small and somewhat brutal dogmatism. Arnold fought against the spirit bravely, and succeeded in breaking a great deal of it down before his death. But he was able to do this very largely for the reason that he was not a great thinker. Had he been a great thinker, the world would not have listened to him so well, and his struggle would have been much more bitter. As it was, the melancholy of his life has given to most of his poetry a peculiar dark tinge, which borders upon pessimism without actually expressing it. His longer poems are his least great; his briefer lyrical pieces best represent his genius. For genius of a certain kind he really had; but the work of no other Victorian poet is so uneven. In this unevenness we are reminded of Wordsworth, with whom Arnold has many points in common.

It is curious how closely the minds of Clough and Arnold ran together. The subjects chosen by each were widely different, of course; but you will find the same forms of verse, the same attempts at innovation, the same efforts at classical imitation in both. You can feel that they were truly brother minds. But Arnold was far the greater. His longer poems do not suffer like those of Clough from any imperfect mastery of technique, but they suffer strangely from other causes. Comparison is one. Undoubtedly "Meropé" is a fine imitation of Greek tragedy, but when this cold poem is compared with the fiery splendour and sonorous music of Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon," it suffers enormously. Had it been written in another age it would have had a better chance.

Again, Arnold was unfortunate even in his choice of subjects, when there was no comparison to be made. "Empedocles on Ætna" is certainly a very remarkable poem, but

how unfortunate is the choice of subject. Empedocles, you know, was a philosopher, who, tradition says, leaped into the crater of Ætna that his memory might become immortal; and the volcano sometime after threw up one of his sandals as a proof of what had happened. Arnold makes Empedocles commit suicide because of doubts and despondencies; he makes Empedocles a very interesting character, capable of making very wonderful verses upon the difficulty of understanding the universe and of bearing the pains of life. The long soliloquy of Empedocles is really the soliloquy of no Greek, but of Matthew Arnold himself. But Arnold had no sense of humour. The ridiculous side of the story never perhaps occurred to him, until George Meredith produced a savage little satire upon Empedocles with his heels in the air. Meredith had written a very beautiful and very healthy poem on nearly the same class of doubts as those which tormented Matthew Arnold, but which never tormented Meredith. Here is the difference between the mere doubter and the thinker, if we compare "Empedocles" with Meredith's study, "Earth and Man." The soliloquy of Empedocles is a very unhealthy poem indeed, and we can not but concede Meredith's right to mock the philosopher who had so little faith in the universe that his doubts frightened him, head first, into the volcano. There is yet another reason why the best of Arnold's poems of the longer class are not likely ever to become really popular. His beautiful dirge on the death of his friend Clough, entitled "Thyrsis," by many thought almost equal to Milton's "Lycidas," appeals chiefly to the feelings of a class, not human feelings at large. It reflects personal remembrances, and it describes, very beautifully, the country in the neighbourhood of Oxford University; but it does not touch those deep common feelings which make poetry immortal. The same thing must be said of his "Scholar Gipsy"—it is an Oxford poem, rather than an English poem. And finally, it may be said that Arnold never found out where his own poetical strength

really lay, and wasted himself upon subjects that might have been left alone. One of these subjects was Norse Mythology. "The Death of Balder" is fine verse, but it will never move us like the strong grand prose of the Scandinavian Edda. "Sohrab and Rustum" is a very fine poem, but who would not prefer the original of the same story in the great Firdusi's "Shah Nameh," now translated into so many European tongues? It is in his briefer pieces alone that Arnold will live.

Among these briefer pieces some give the preference to "The Forsaken Merman." I should not care to express the same judgment; but certainly the ordinary selections from Arnold's short poems, many of which have been recently edited for school use, are all worthy of careful reading, and some will always haunt the memory—like that delicious little piece about hearing a thrush sing in Kensington Gardens. I shall only give such extracts as may serve to illustrate the beautiful melancholy of Arnold's alternate doubts and hopes. The finest of all his short poems in my personal opinion is that called "The Future," representing the flowing of the river of life, the flowing of the mind of man. After regretting the vanishing of faith, after expressing the sorrows and fears of the time, the poet asks whether man can ever hope to know and whether he can ever hope for peace. Then comes the beautiful gleam of thought closing the otherwise sombre composition.

> Haply, the River of Time,
> As it grows, as the towns on its marge
> Fling their wavering lights
> On a wider, statelier stream—
> May acquire, if not the calm
> Of its early mountainous shore,
> Yet a solemn peace of its own.
>
> And the width of the waters, the hush
> Of the grey expanse where he floats
> Freshening its current, and spotted with foam

As it draws to the Ocean, may strike
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast:
As the pale waste widens around him—
As the banks fade dimmer away—
And the stars come out, and the night wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite Sea.

But in most of the poems the note is very much lower, infinitely less hopeful, as in these lines—

As the foaming swath
Of torn-up water, on the main,
Falls heavily away with long-drawn roar
On either side the black deep-furrowed path
Cut by an onward-labouring vessel's prore,
And never touches the ship-side again;

Even so we leave behind,
As, chartered by some unknown Powers,
We stem across the sea of life by night,
The joys which were not for our use designed:
The friends to whom we had no natural right:
The homes that were not destined to be ours.

These verses from the beautiful piece entitled "Human Life" really represent the habitual feeling of the poet—doubt and sorrow. Perhaps this is why his poetry, or at least some of it, will long continue to appeal to the old rather than to the young—to the men who are disillusioned, who have known the same doubts, the same sorrows and the same unfulfilled aspirations. But I think the student ought to be warned against over-estimation of Arnold either as a poet or as a philosopher. The fact that he was able to do so much good, to break down the barriers of prejudice, to give new life to English criticism, is proof itself that he was not much in advance of his age as a thinker. Herbert Spencer has well said that the successful reformer is never the man who is very much in advance of his age, but the man who is only a very little in advance of it. To the man

who is very much in advance of his time there is no prospect of success; during his life the public will not listen to him because they do not understand; he will be calumniated by those who differ from him, and even his best thoughts will be plagiarized and used by small minds against those very reforms which he gave his life to bring about. Matthew Arnold was more fortunate, because he reflected the best of his own class of thought, not because he was at all in advance of his time.

Before closing this little series of notes, I may refer briefly to a female poet classed by Mr. Saintsbury and other critics among the poets of pessimism—I mean Constance Naden. I want to say a good word for Constance Naden, because it has become a fashion for conventional critics either to mention her with contempt or not mention her at all. The reason is that the girl professed agnosticism, gave lectures of an anti-Christian character, and made herself during her life rather objectionable to the religious. After death she was not more fortunate in her editors. Instead of publishing her poems merely as literature, which is how they ought to have been published, they rather foolishly put them forth as anti-Christian verses; while some of her enthusiastic but ill-advised friends established by way of honouring her memory a yearly prize-contest, of which the subject was to be an essay upon Hylo-Idealism,—that is, the hypothesis that mind depends altogether on matter, and does not exist without it. As a consequence Miss Naden has not received the attention she deserved. In reading her poems, I can not find in them those extreme views attributed to her by her editors, and I very much doubt whether she really entertained them. She must have been a remarkable person, for she was a personal friend of Herbert Spencer, who spoke of her work and of her abilities in very high terms. She gave her whole life to such undertakings as the improvement of the social condition and education of women, writing at intervals very clever verses for the London magazines.

She visited India in the pursuit of her educational enterprise, and there contracted a fever, which resulted eventually in her early death. Much of her verse is philosophical, and is cast in difficult forms, such as the sonnet, which she mastered with great ease. I can not quote any of these for you, because we have more important names to consider; but I must say that I believe some of the work to be of very high quality—such as the two sonnets entitled "Starlight." Besides composing original poems, she translated a number of beautiful things from other languages, and one of these I may quote for you, not only because it is very short, but because it is one of those by which she will long be remembered.

THE EYE

(From the German of Emil Rittershaus)

The Human Soul,—a world in little;
  The World,—a greater human soul;
The Eye of man,—a radiant mirror,
  That, clear and true, reflects the whole.

And, as in every eye thou meetest
  The mirrored image of thine own,
Each mortal sees his soul reflected,
  In all the world himself alone.

CHAPTER XXIII

PHILOSOPHICAL POEMS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

I

BROWNING'S "RABBI BEN EZRA"

In a certain sense every great poet is a great priest. While it is quite true that few of the greater poets of any country in Europe have been orthodox believers—strict member of any church or creed; while it is even true that most of them have been distinguished rather as free-thinkers than as believers—nevertheless it is equally true that all of them, or nearly all of them, have been men of deep faith. Their faith has been their own—they have recognised in their own free way the great mystery of the universe, the feebleness of human wisdom to read that mystery, the impermanency of most things, and the ethical necessities of ordered existence. Being men of peculiarly fine and delicate organisation, they have also been for the most part sensitive to wrong, strenuous for right, and in a certain way better able to tolerate and to judge than the majority of lesser men. Life has oppressed them more heavily, perhaps, than any others; they have accordingly been almost forced to give more thought to the reasons of human sorrow and social inequality. Finally, by the very nature of their profession, they have had to live a great deal alone, under conditions compelling them to think and feel profoundly. Whoever thinks and feels profoundly about life and the riddles of life, almost necessarily becomes something of a religious teacher if he puts his best thoughts into print. And it is to men of this class that the world has learned to look for a certain kind of unconventional moral teaching

and for consolation in unconventional philosophic thought. The world has recognised that the poet—the great poet—is a kind of priest; the term World Priest has well been given to several of the greatest.

Now there are two ways in which the great poet figures as a priest. One is by simply reflecting and teaching the best moral thought of his own country and time. The other and larger method is by teaching men to think in entirely new ways about whole-truth, and so teaching that the boundaries of religions, countries, races, all vanish in the consideration of expanded verities. The men who can teach in the latter way are, indeed, very few, but they are the true World Priests. The great German Goethe was a poet of this kind.

During the last period of English poetry there were very few philosophical poems of the very first rank produced, for the obvious reason that men's minds were at that time in an unsettled state. A new philosophy, a new theory of the universe, was being fiercely debated; old beliefs were weakening or vanishing, and between the past and the present many poets did not really know how to choose. Some few kept to the old order of things, two or three dared to speak new thoughts fearlessly, a majority remained wavering, half-way. At the present time the new thought seems to have conquered, but poetry has become silent. The new poets have not yet learned, perhaps, how to face the new riddles. But it is very interesting in this moment of hush, to look back to the Victorian period, and see what its great philosophical compositions expressed of the thought of the time. Four or five poems will teach us a great deal in regard to the psychological aspects of Victorian poetry.

No personality of this period is more interesting than that of Browning, and we should naturally expect even more from him than he has given us of philosophical poetry. Many and many a reader has studied Browning in vain for a clear explanation of what he thought about the problems

of his time. Here and there we find a hint of the influence of new ideas, but perhaps upon the very next page, or even upon the same page, we find some expressions of sympathy with vanishing beliefs. Books have been written about the philosophy of Browning, and I think that most of them are simply nonsense. The truth is that Browning never attempted to express any one kind or school of philosophy; what is more, he very seldom tried to express his own opinion at all. The whole of his method was opposed to such presentation. It was a psychological method; its purpose was not to put forth personal ideas, but to explain by sympathetic intuition the ideas and the beliefs of other great minds. To illustrate this fact better, let me speak in detail of Browning's method. He would read a book of history, philosophy, ethics, metaphysics—it matters little what—by some great man; then he would try to understand from that book the soul of the man who wrote it. He would say to himself, "A man who wrote like this, must have thought in such and such a way; I can understand him, and I can make him live again, make him speak as if he were alive." Then he would write about that man, and make him act according to his conception. It was in this way that Browning wrote philosophical poems. Naturally it was not the living men of his own time who could have furnished him with the material that he wanted; they were too near him, they had not yet completed their life-work. He turned naturally to the great minds of the past, and he cared nothing about when they lived, or where they lived, or what creed they belonged to; he did not even care whether they were right or wrong, provided that they had a great lesson to teach, which he could understand.

But although this was Browning's distinguishing dramatic method, he nevertheless sometimes becomes a poet-priest by virtue of that intense sympathy which he was able to feel and to express even for beliefs that were not his own. If you can understand another person's religion—the emotional

germ of truth which is in it, the promptings which it gives to conscience, the consolations which it bestows on him in the time of trouble; if you can understand all this and faithfully express it, you virtually preach the boon which is in that religion, whether you believe it or not. Browning could do this. He could also understand wickedness and express that.

By his poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra" Browning made his most notable contribution to the metaphysical poetry of the Victorian age. He took for his subject the character of a famous Spanish Jew, more generally known in literary history by his Arabian name Ben Ezra, who was born at Toledo early in the eleventh century. Having read the work of this man, Browning tried to express the character of him in the form of an imaginary discourse upon old age, the riddle of life, and the purpose of God—supposed to be spoken by this Jewish teacher of nine hundred years ago. The poem is partly religious, but that portion of it regarding the relation of old age to the life of man is philosophical in the best sense. Already this composition has become very famous, and nobody can be said to know much about Browning's poems who is not acquainted with it. We can study it without necessarily reading the whole of it—for it is rather long; but we shall take each of the gems which it contains, and dwell a little upon their lustre.

The first part of the poem relates to old age considered from a different standpoint from that in which Cicero viewed it in other times.

> Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life, for which the first was made:
> Our time is in His hand
> Who saith, "A whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid."

A confession of Jewish faith at the outset need not make you doubt the broad interest of wider thoughts to come.

And even here the introduction promises well, with its startling suggestion about the value of old age. Some Greek writers indeed spoke of old age as a period of calm from troubles, but most of them expressed the dread of its coming, and the sadness of an old man's memory. Cicero has nothing to say about old age that can console a modern old man who reads it; for Cicero's proposed consolations for old age would require a good deal of money to procure. The idea that old age might really be better than youth did not occur very often to minds that lived in the period when the chief purpose of living was thought to be personal happiness. It required some sterner creed to insist upon an answer to this plain question, "Is the object of life really personal happiness?" Of course the creed of Ben Ezra declared the very contrary, but he was certainly one of the first to declare boldly that old age is better than youth simply because of its being the time of knowledge and understanding. That is the meaning of the line "The best is yet to be." All the experiences of youth and of middle age should be thought of as only a preparation for old age. The life of man should be considered as a complete circle, a God-planned whole, and old age is the best part of that whole, the jewel in the ring-circle. Quite true, it is the period preceding death, and the old man is obliged to think a good deal about death, but what has he to be afraid of? Let him trust the power that has made him, and fear nothing.

But Ben Ezra says, "Do not imagine that I wish to find fault with youth, and the follies of youth, and scepticism of youth." The young man seeks pleasures, tires of them, goes in search of them, then talks about what he thought was best. Or he is wildly ambitious—he wants to be not only as great as the great men that he sees or reads about, but greater and more famous than any. All this is only because of his innocence and ignorance; and for the same reason in those early years he does not think about

serious things—he doubts the teachings of wisdom. But, says Ezra, "Doubt is a good thing in the mind of a young man when it comes in a natural way—when it comes as the necessary result of limited knowledge." Indeed it is only the utterly ignorant, the hopelessly stupid, who never doubt—they are mere lumps of matter, "clods untroubled by a spark," as the poet recites. Doubt and folly have their reason for being; but the time comes with every sensible man when he must preceive that the true object of life is not enjoyment, not selfish pleasure. If it were, what difference could there be between a man and a beast? For the beast indeed seeks its own pleasure, and if man does the same, it were but right that he should end in the same way. And the time comes when he has to recognise that there is something much more for him to do in the world than cultivate his appetites.

The first part of the poem, then, may be summarised thus: Old age is the flower and crown of life, because it is the age of wisdom, and all other years of life are but a preparation for it. The faults of youth are not to be despised nor unreasonably regretted; we learn only through making mistakes. The greatest of such mistakes is the fancy that life is to be valued in terms of pleasure. That is an animal idea of life.

Here the student should remember that the poet is expressing the ideas of a Jew, not a man of the nineteenth century, not of a philosopher of to-day. The distinction between the animal and the man is too strongly made, and belongs to an age in which thinking life was denied to animals by the metaphysicians. To-day we know better. Animals think, animals reason, and animals have a simple morality of their own, a moral consciousness and a very strong sense of duty. Indeed, in any modern great work on psychology you will find something relating to the morality of animals.

But to continue from the point of the poem at which we

stopped. It is a man's duty, the poet says, to consider pain not as a misfortune but as a blessing. He has told us that we learn by mistakes, and that is only another way of saying that we learn wisdom through pain. It is pain that makes us wise, that makes us unselfish, that makes us good men.

> Then welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
> Be our joys three-parts pain!
> Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!
>
> For thence,—a paradox
> Which comforts while it mocks,—
> Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
> What I aspired to be,
> And was not, comforts me:
> A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

We should welcome every rebuff, every blow, every mishap that interrupts our pleasure in this world, or, as the poet puts it symbolically, "Turns the smoothness of the world rough" for us. We should welcome every shock of necessity that does not allow us to remain idle, to sit and amuse ourselves, but obliges us to make a strong effort in order to live. It is well for us that three parts of every pleasure must be pain (I believe that this is the accurate philosophical calculation of the true proportion of pain and pleasure in common life); if it were otherwise we could not make so much moral progress. We should think that the pain of effort is really cheap, we should learn without thinking about the cost, we should never be afraid to do the best we can, or be unwilling to pay the cost of effort in suffering. The truth is that everybody's life is more or less of a success to just the same degree that it is more or less

of a failure! This seems like a paradox, but it is a truth, and we shall find it a very comforting truth when we understand the meaning of life and the meaning of law. It is not what a man is able to do that Heaven judges him by; it is by what he wishes and tries to do; and if he tries to do the impossible in a good direction, he will not be judged by his failure, but by his purpose.

Nevertheless, we must not think contemptuously of the body and of the senses, and of the pleasures that the senses provide. For by these we can learn, and do learn. There is no ascetic spirit in Ezra; he would consider such a spirit folly.

> For pleasant is this flesh;
> Our soul, in its rose-mesh
> Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;
> Would we some prize might hold
> To match those manifold
> Possessions of the brute,—gain most as we did best!
>
> Let us not always say
> "Spite of this flesh to-day
> I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
> As the bird wings and sings,
> Let us cry "All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Very pleasant, he says, is this natural life of the body, the life that inclines us to pleasure, to idleness, to mere delight. The body is like a rosy net which keeps the bird of the soul from flying to the heaven which it desires. Indeed, it may seem hard that we can not get our reward for effort in the same way that the animal does. The animal that is most active, most swift, most strong, gets most pleasure out of existence. It is not that way in the case of man. We do not get pleasure in proportion to the moral effort which we make—nor need we expect it. We must be content to anticipate a higher form of reward when freed from

the net of the body. But do not say for that reason that the body is a hindrance—do not struggle unreasonably against nature. If you are wise, you will find that the body can help the soul just as much as the soul can help the body, which means "use your best faculties, and your senses in the wisest way; and your very senses will help you to become wise and good." From the moral point of view the foregoing reflection will pass criticism very well. But, as a matter of fact, and although there are exceptions to this rule, the man who struggles best in the world is very likely to obtain the best that it has to offer. The race is to the stronger. However, Ben Ezra is not speaking of worldly success.

The next few verses deal with the rewards of a good life in the time of old age. It is only when old, he tells us, that a man can fairly judge his own acts in the past—can really know whether he was right or wrong about many things. From the experience of the past we can learn to face the future. It is better that, as young men, we can not know, for the experience which makes us know is better for us than any teaching of texts or lips.

> Youth ended, I shall try
> My gain or loss thereby;
> Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
> And I shall weigh the same,
> Give life its praise or blame:
> Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

Here the fire referred to is the fire of youth, of impulse, of passion, of unreflecting emotion. But when this fire has been burned out—that is to say, when the man has become old,—what is left of his mind is like gold that has been in the furnace, and has been separated from all dross. "Was I right to be angry that day? Was I right to yield on that other day?" Such questions as these can not be justly answered in the moment that the young man first puts them to his conscience. But when he puts those questions again

to himself in the time of his old age, he can answer them, perhaps only he—and God. The judgment of the world, as to a man's actions, must not be trusted. How should it be trusted? How can the world truly judge a man?

> Was I, the world arraigned,
> Were they, my soul disdained,
> Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!
>
> Now, who shall arbitrate?
> Ten men love what I hate,
> Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
> Ten, who in ears and eyes
> Match me: we all surmise,
> They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

If we rely upon mere human evidence, as to our personal worth, indeed we shall never know what that worth is. For every man of action must have at least ten enemies, or antagonists, who affect to despise him or openly hate him. Ten men will unite their ten opinions against his one. They will say, "What you did was foolish, what you obtained was of no value, what you liked was altogether worthless." How are you to prove that you are right and those ten men are wrong? Can you prove that they are not so learned as you, so clear-seeing as you, so quickly perceiving as you? Very probably they are more learned, more intellectually keen, more perceiving—altogether, as human forces, much better men than you. Nevertheless you must not be afraid of this evidence, if your conscience declares you right. The whole world may condemn you, but if you are right you must not heed the condemnation; your conscience and God ought to be friends enough for you. Besides, it is not by what the man does that God will judge him, but by what he wanted to do. Here the poet compares man to a vessel of clay shaped by a potter. The potter is God himself; the clay-vessel is the cup or body of one life. From this point begins a series of very beautiful verses—

those which have especially made the poem famous. The following deal with human purpose as distinguished from human action:

> Not on the vulgar mass
> Called "work," must sentence pass,
> Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
> O'er which, from level stand,
> The low world laid its hand
> Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:
>
> But all, the world's coarse thumb
> And finger failed to plumb,
> So passed in making up the main account;
> All instincts immature,
> All purposes unsure,
> That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:
>
> Thoughts hardly to be packed
> Into a narrow act,
> Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

The world judges the man by his work, by the quantity of it, vulgarly; and the approbation of the world is really worth nothing at all. The worth of a man is in what the coarse judgment of the world can not estimate—in what the coarse fingers of the world can not span or measure—in what the man has never done, and could not do, but might have done if heaven had permitted. The best of a man may be in the thoughts that he could not express, in fancies that he never could utter by mere words, and therefore quickly forgot again. It may be exactly in the things that a man only wished to do, but could not do, that his real worth lies. In short, his worth may be only "potential," to use the philosophical term. Even from the scientific point of view there is a good deal of truth in this. The

best qualities of a man may appear in his grandchildren or great grandchildren; they furnish the proof of the worth of the ancestor. But Ben Ezra refers only to the purpose of the infinite potter, who knows perfectly well the qualities and the possibilities of the clay which he is moulding.

> Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
> That metaphor! and feel
> Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
> Thou, to whom fools propound,
> When the wine makes its round,
> "Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"
>
> Fool! All that is, at all,
> Lasts ever, past recall;
> Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
> What entered into thee,
> That was, is, and shall be:
> Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

The metaphor of the potter and the wheel is taken from Isaiah, lxiv, 8. The poet makes the metaphor still finer by representing the whirl of time as the whirling of the wheel —the mighty wheel of Cosmos, upon which all forms are shaped. But though the form and the name may pass, the Substance and the Maker have neither beginning nor end; and whatever is real, has always been and will always be. I need scarcely tell you that this is rank heresy from the narrow standpoint of any orthodox Christian. This is not western thinking at all, but oriental thinking, with something of Platonism in it. It is not even Jewish in an orthodox sense. The idea that the soul of man will always be, is both Hebrew and Christian; but in the idea that it always has been, and that the mere fact of its existence would prove that it always had been, the teaching of Ben Ezra comes very near to the thinking of the Far East. As a matter of fact, Ben Ezra considered the soul very much as it is considered in the great eastern religions, a compound;

and only the best of a man, the absolutely pure qualities of self, he imagined to be eternal and immortal. The evil and the folly, the sensuous part of self, might crumble and die, but the elements of pure wisdom would continue forever. And now observe how the metaphor of the potter and the vase is still further elaborated. The body of a man and the common part of his mind is but a cup or vase, made by the Supreme Potter to be filled with that water of life which is pure wisdom and immortal. That is all. That is the truth which every man should try to recognise—that he is only like a cup, for the use of the Supreme. In the making of old Greek and Roman vases, it was occasionally the custom to decorate such vases with figures in relief. This was managed by moulding the cup in a particular way—and the fact suggests to the poet a still finer elaboration of the metaphor. About the bottom of the vase of life, representing youth, there are certain dancing figures, images of loves, cupids. But about the rim of the cup, the part last finished, the decoration consists of figures of skulls—grim things that suggest death and perhaps the decay of old illusions.

> What though the earlier grooves
> Which ran the laughing loves
> Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
> What though about thy rim,
> Skull-things in order grim
> Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?
>
> Look thou not down but up!
> To uses of a cup,
> The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
> The new wine's foaming flow,
> The Master's lips a-glow!
> Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with
> earth's wheel?

That is to say, "O man, thou who art but a cup made for the use of the Divine Maker, be not dismayed because the first part of the work is ended and done,—because that part

of the cup which represented youth and beauty and the illusion of existence is finished,—nor because at this moment thou feelest that the Decorator is making upon you images of death, and not of life! Think only of the use of the cup; think only of the immortal banquet at which you are to be filled for the use of the Master! The earth was indeed the wheel upon which you were shaped by the great Potter; but the work of the wheel being done, why regret it? Thou hast no more need of the wheel, no more need of the world. Thy destiny is the table of the eternal banquet."

> But I need, now as then,
> Thee, God, who mouldest men;
> And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
> Did I, to the wheel of life,
> With shapes and colours rife,
> Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:
>
> So, take and use Thy work,
> Amend what flaws may lurk,
> What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
> My times be in Thy hand!
> Perfect the cup as planned!
> Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

The last verses embody the whole religious philosophy of the poem; and the last stanza may be regarded as a little prayer to the eternal Potter begging him to make perfect his work and to remove all the imperfections of the material. Every line is doubly suggestive. Now it is very curious to notice how the Persian poet Omar Khayyám, of whom I spoke to you, uses the very same comparison of the Potter and the clay for an entirely opposite teaching. The contrast of the ideas inspired by the same metaphor in two utterly different minds, is one of the most remarkable things in metaphysical poetry.

II

SWINBURNE'S "HERTHA"

THE really great work of the Victorian period in the metaphysical direction seems to be represented by four poets only,—Tennyson, Browning, Meredith, and Swinburne. Tennyson's work you know: it is chiefly to be found in the great elegiac poem of "In Memoriam," the couplets of "The Two Voices," and in a number of shorter pieces, such as "Vastness." But Tennyson is rather a reflector, a mirror, of ideas of a class than an original voice. He never suffered himself to go very far out of the common track of thought followed by his own particular class, which always remained on the safe side of heterodoxy. What gives his utterances on the subject literary value is never their newness, but the extreme beauty of the language in which they are expressed. Browning is very much deeper, and we have read the best of his work in this direction, such as the musical poem of "Abt Vogler" and the religious poem of "Rabbi Ben Ezra." Swinburne we have not yet studied. It is rather surprising to find him in the rôle of philosopher; for it is as a poet of the senses that he is particularly noted. But the student ought to know that perhaps the very best poem which he has written—if it be possible, in view of such perfection, to call any one of his poems better than another—is a metaphysical poem, and one that will probably never disappear from the treasure house of English literature. It is entitled "Hertha."

Hertha was the name given by old northern races to the goddess or spirit of the earth. In other words, it is very much the same name as earth in a female personification. All of the great polytheistic religions had such a divinity; the old classical goddess, Ceres, mother of harvest, was a goddess of this kind. Now the ancient ideas regarding an earth divinity have never entirely passed away. They

linger in literature with hundreds of idioms and phrases preserved from Greek and Latin sources. And when we talk to-day about nature's doing this, or producing that, desiring this, opposing that,—we are really speaking and thinking very much in old Roman and Greek ways. Observe also that we invariably speak in good literature of nature as "she." Nature remains still feminine in our poetry and our prose, and in our imagination, as in the imagination of a Roman in the days before Christianity.

Now in all these ancient conceptions of an earth goddess there was a certain grain of truth. The mystery of life and of the world is not a bit clearer to the scientific mind of to-day than it was to the minds of the ancients. Indeed, all that science has done is to make plainer for us certain laws of nature, certain directions in which she moves, but of what nature is, science can not tell us anything at all. Life is just as much a riddle as it ever was, and it will probably be a riddle as long as time endures. However, I think we may define nature scientifically as signifying forces which shape all things and dissolve all things—the powers of creation and the powers of disintegration. This makes nature at one with all that men have called God. Nature means for the scientist Force, for the scientific philosopher, the Unknown, and for the religious believer, God. If we unite the three conceptions in one, the result will be very much what Swinburne's Hertha is,—the spirit of all things, mothering all things, directing all things, containing all things. With this explanation, the beauty of the poem will be more manifest to our minds.

I am that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me God and man;
I am equal and whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,

Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-coloured fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird; before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves, I am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

Before we examine the verses in detail it must be observed that, beautiful as they are, there at first sight appears to be an inappropriate use of imagery. Here is the spirit of the universe addressing us—yet comparing itself to a tree! You know that it is considered a kind of literary rule not to compare the great with the small, and here we have the infinite comparing itself with a tree! But really this use of imagery is very skilful; it is justified by the old northern mythology. In that mythology the source of all life was said to be the great ash tree Yggdrasil, whose roots were in the shadows of death, and whose head rose far above the highest heavens. Upon its lower branches the world was suspended, like a disc, and upon its middle branches were the heavens of the gods. That is the tree to which the poet

refers, and you see that the image is a tremendous one. He could not have used it, perhaps, if he had not called his poem "Hertha"—but that title justifies the introduction of the tree of life. Now let us paraphrase.

"I am that which made all beginnings; and I created Time. God and men alike came from me; yet I am always infinitely ONE and infinitely complete. Human conceptions of God change with the years; human character changes; everything having bodily form changes. But I change never, because I am the soul of all things.

"Before there was any land or sea, any life, even of grass, my life was; and the life that is now your life was even then contained within me (the image of 'flesh-coloured fruit' used in the fifth line of this second stanza signifies the human race).

"On the sources of my being all life first appeared as upon the surface of the sea. I shape, but I unshape also; I preserve, but I likewise destroy. Human beings and animals and birds and all creatures are of me, and I was before any gods ever were.

"Neither is it possible to go outside of me—either above me or below me; for I am equally all depth and all height. Nor is it possible to have any knowledge or any feeling that is not of me. Hate me or love me; it is I who am the hater and the lover. Strike me; the blow is given by me, not by any other.

"I am the target which is shot at, and I am the arrows shot; and I am the lips of the girl that is kissed; yet I am also at the same time the life in the lover that kisses her. I am the seeker, and the act of seeking, and the thing sought for—the soul in everything, yet the body or form of everything as well."

The northern imagery in the early part of the verses is here suddenly exchanged for Oriental imagery. I need scarcely remind you that the fourth and the fifth stanzas are almost literal renderings of passages from the Sanskrit

Bhagavad-Gita,—the greatest of all pantheistic poems ever written. Whether Swinburne actually took his inspiration from some translation of the Indian poem, or whether from some other source, I can not say. But there is a very famous poem entitled "Brahma" translated from the Persian by Ritter, which would have given him the same inspiration; and the succession of images in the work of the Persian mystic happens to be very much the same as in Swinburne's poem. You can find the poem in the "Poems of Places," in the library, in the volumes relating to India. Very much like the Ritter translation in spirit, but less impressive as poetry, are Emerson's verses "Brahma." The Indian imagination has appealed at once to thinkers of every class and in almost every country.

Swinburne has used a great many other images of recognisably Indian origin, but he has not by any means confined himself to this source. The inspiration of the following verses is Hebrew.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?
Has the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?

Of course this irony is taken directly from the Book of Job, the most sublime of all the poetical books of the Bible. And it does not lose in the borrowing—which is saying a great deal. Thus we have in the first part of the poem a very wonderful mingling of inspiration from three sublime sources—northern mythology, the Bhagavad-Gita, and the Book of Job. Any man capable of uniting such widely different elements into one symmetrical whole could not fail to make a good poem; and this Swinburne has done. But, as we shall see, he has gone also to other sources for the material of "Hertha," including the best work of the great Greek poets.

The poet denies the work of the gods,—or rather the existence of any other gods than nature, making this nature speak in the name of Hertha, who is

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have pray'd.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith;

Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Alway to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night,
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight.

There is here a strange mixing together of old Greek and of modern ideas, of paganism and Christianity, of paganism and of individualism. The poet suggests, rather than declares, with modern science, that there is no creation—that what is, always was in essence. The universe came into being, but the substance of it has always been; its becoming was only a becoming of form. So, too, it was with man. Only as form was man born; the spirit within him has always been, and that spirit is one with the spirit of the universe.

The second stanza contains a few lines characteristic of Swinburne's radical views. "A creed is a rod," means that any religion is but a system of terror, a force of fear to rule human conduct. "A crown of night," means that governments all represent an inferior and ignorant condition of so-

ciety—that in a perfect society no government would be necessary. Then comes the assurance that man is god-like in proportion as he is able to cultivate his faculties; this is the gospel of individualism, reaching in fact to old Greek thought on the one hand, and touching Emerson on the other. Nature, says the poet, offers everything, and we in return should be generous in all things to nature. It is not right or necessary that we should worship her with fearful reverence; she does not want that. Neither is it necessary that we should consider her as a servant; if we do that, she will soon teach us our mistake. What she wants is our love, and we should give ourselves to her freely, out of love, for no other motive. As suggestions, there are great truths here; but there are also positions taken to which it would not be possible to give any moral definition. Does Swinburne mean to say that the end of life is to live, in the highest sense of the word,—cultivating all our power and gratifying all our desires? If he does, his position is not at all satisfactory. As I suggested to you in a recent discourse, nature seems to be implacably opposed to individual selfishness; she sacrifices the individual without mercy for the sake of the species; and the tendency of the universe seems to be toward the creation of altruism, not toward the creation of egotism. I do not think that any great moral philosopher would be satisfied with Swinburne's position, if we interpret it in this way. But it is otherwise if we simply regard his poem as a beautiful song of the unity of life. So far as it expresses this grand truth, it is beautiful and worthy of all admiration. But we must not look upon it as a moral sermon. I have given you the cream of it, and you will find many other beauties if you desire to look for them. Only, no matter how much we may admire such verses as the following, we must remember that it would be quite impossible to shape any ethical belief out of them:

> **Thought made him and breaks him,**
> **Truth slays and forgives;**

But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

This is a kind of assertion that as belief in God passes away with time, the religion to be substituted for it will be the religion of human love: and this is Shelley's thought in another form. Scientifically, it has been said that the future tendency of human morals will certainly be toward such a consummation—there is no fault to be found with the hope; but the declaration that love is truth, is very much open to discussion. It requires qualifications of a very profound description before we can entertain it at all. There is here, to the ordinary mind, a confusion of words with things. Unless we accept only one possible moral suggestion, that a state of love, unselfish love, represents the best possible condition, and that the best of all possible conditions is likely to be the nearest to truth, we can get no satisfactory meaning out of it. As a poem, "Hertha" is beyond praise; as philosophy and morality it is unquestionably thin and disappointing. But let us see how a more powerful thinker has treated the same subject in poetry.

III

MEREDITH'S "EARTH AND MAN"

Like Swinburne, Meredith preaches the unity of life, but he preaches it in a much vaster way, even beyond all time

and space. Like Swinburne, he would probably regard all gods and all religions as perishable phenomena; but he can find truth and beauty and use in all beliefs, in spite of their ephemeral forms. And like Swinburne, he regards all past and present and future existence as linked together. But when he comes to speak of the meaning of life in relation to ourselves, he has very much more to say than Swinburne. He will not tell you that

> This thing is god,
> To be man with thy might.

Indeed, to any person making such utterances he would immediately put the Socratic question: "What is the meaning of your phrase 'to be man with thy might'? Be so kind as to define the word 'man' and the word 'might,' so that I can understand what you are trying to say." Meredith is probably not so far from Swinburne's way of thinking as might appear; but he is at least much more definite, and leaves us no doubt at all about his opinion. For Meredith, nature is indeed a god, but a very terrible god, a very exacting god; and our duty to that divinity is plain enough. Life is duty; the character of that duty is effort; the direction of that effort should be self-cultivation; and the self-cultivation must be of the highest human faculties at the expense of the lower. That is to say that man must cultivate his mental and moral faculties, and subjugate all his senses to that end. All sensualism, all vice, all cruelty, all indolence, represent crime against the purposes of nature. So Meredith frankly preaches a nature-religion, and his religion is very terrible,—all the more terrible because we feel it to be perfectly true, because it is the religion of a thinking man of science, who is almost incapable of any sentimental weakness. Indeed, Meredith's moral poems are strangely awful; there is no word of pity in them, no syllable of mercy for human weakness of any sort. Nature is said to be unforgiving in the supreme degree, and Meredith is also un-

forgiving in the supreme degree. There is no tenderness in him,—none whatever. He is speaking for nature, speaking with her own voice, and he is teaching ethics according to the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. But he is not by any means so quietly dispassionate as Herbert Spencer; he is not content with an agnostic position in regard to the far-off tendency of things. He believes in the moral order of the universe, and it is quite enough for him that we can guess the immediate future without troubling ourselves in regard to infinite time. But we can best understand the quality of his teaching by turning to his poetry, and I shall quote herewith his introduction to "Earth and Man."

On her great venture, Man,
Earth gazes while her fingers dint the breast
Which is his well of strength, his home of rest,
And fair to scan.

More aid than that embrace,
That nourishment, she cannot give: his heart
Involves his fate; and she who urged the start
Abides the race.

For he is in the lists
Contentious with the elements, whose dower
First sprang him; for swift vultures to devour
If he desists.

His breath of instant thirst
Is warning of a creature matched with strife,
To meet it as a bride, or let fall life
On life's accursed.

. . . . . .

By hunger sharply sped
To grasp at weapons ere he learns their use,
In each new ring he bears a giant's thews,
An infant's head.

And ever that old task
Of reading what he is and whence he came,
Whither to go, finds wilder letters flame
Across her mask.

Earth is here compared to a living nurse, who presses her breasts in order to help her child-man suck the milk of life. Man is her "venture"—the word is here used in the sense of "doubtful undertaking." She has made man—that is, formed him, but she does not know whether her work will be successful as she wishes. Body she has given him, but the inner life of him, the ghost of him, that is beyond her power to make or unmake: she can not help him in regard to his spiritual being. She is only the nurse, she can only give him nourishment; for all the rest he must help himself. She tells him to run, but she can not help him win the race.

What is the race? The Race of Life,—the struggle for existence. Every being must take part in that race or perish. Man is in the "lists"—that is, on the race-course of life, and his competitors are very terrible; for they are no other than the elemental forces of nature. These forces gave him life, but they will also give him death if he lose the race. Let him stop running for one moment, and the vultures of death will descend upon him and destroy him.

The hunger of a new-born child,—the thirst of a babe for the mother milk,—is in itself a proof of the condition of man. Born hungry, he must struggle all his life for nourishment, and he must not be afraid of striving. The being that strives joyously, the creature that rejoices in effort even as a bridegroom rejoices at the prospect of greeting his bride,—only that creature can be successful. He who refuses to struggle is nature's accursed; let him perish! let the curtain of death hide him away forever!

Now this hunger with which man came into existence obliged him to struggle before he had any weapons to help him in his contest. Doubtless his first weapons were of stone; and he must have attempted to use the weapons long before he was able either to make them well or to use them well. Follow his history back through the past, and you

find him in primitive ages a giant in strength indeed, but only a baby in intelligence.

But becoming a little more intelligent, he begins to think about the secret of his existence. Where did he come from? Why is he in the world? Whither is he going? The secret of the Whence, the Why, and the Whither is completely hidden from the beginning. He tries to explain the mystery, and at every attempt to explain it, the more difficult it becomes. The line describing how man, at every such effort, "finds wilder letters flaming across the mask of nature," reminds us of the old story about the veil of the Egyptian goddess Isis, who also after a fashion represented the divine principle in nature. Before her statue there hangs a veil, and whoever attempts to lift it, finds another veil. And if he tries to lift the second, behind it appears a third. If he tries to lift the third, behind it appears a fourth—and so on forever. This old legend has furnished us with many excellent comparisons for the mystery of nature. Science is often compared to a man trying to lift the veil of Isis, and always finding behind each fold another fold. The word "mask" you must understand in the sense of disguise or illusion, and the expression about letters of fire hints at old legends about magical riddles. Nature presents man riddles to read. As soon as he reads one, another appears written in its place. If he can not read, he must die; but if he reads, then a still harder task is put before him.

Now follows a description of how nature appeared to man. At first he worshipped her as a terrible divinity, and she showed him no more kindness on that account. Then he worshipped her as a beautiful and loving divinity; and she treated him no whit more kindly than before. Now again, because of his experience with her, she appears to him without pity and blind,—a monstrous force that can not see or hear—"blind as fire."

Seen of his dread, she is to his blank eye
The eyeless ghost.

. . . . . .

Once worshipped Prime of Powers,
She still was the Implacable: as a beast,
She struck him down and dragged him from the feast
She crowned with flowers.

Her pomp of glorious hues,
Her revelries of ripeness, her kind smile,
Her songs, her peeping faces, lure awhile
With symbol-clues.

. . . . . .

He may entreat, aspire,
He may despair, and she has never heed.
She drinking his warm sweat will soothe his need,
Not his desire.

She prompts him to rejoice,
Yet scares him on the threshold with the shroud.
He deems her cherishing of her best-endowed
A wanton's choice.

Albeit thereof he has found
Firm roadway between lustfulness and pain;
Has half transferred the battle to his brain,
From bloody ground;

He will not read her good,
Or wise, but with the passion Self obscures;
Through that old devil of the thousand lures,
Through that dense hood:

Through terror, through distrust;
The greed to touch, to view, to have, to live;
Through all that makes of him a sensitive
Abhorring dust.

Nature is at once frightful and inexplicable of character, simply because we can not understand her moral teaching. Once learned, there is nothing unlovable in na-

ture. Refuse to learn, and the result is pain, horror and death. Nature is like a divinity inviting us to a great banquet, where all the tables are made beautiful with lights and flowers, and she says "Come in, eat and drink and be merry—how good it is to eat and drink!" So men go and eat and drink at nature's table; but in the middle of the feast she seizes the guests, tears them in pieces, and devours them. At another time she tempts us with beauty and youth and lust, saying, "Behold these creatures, how fair they are! they were made to gratify these eyes; caress them!" And the tempted man yields to the caress—and nature again destroys him. What does all this mean? Is nature utterly wicked and cruel? No, she is not; she is teaching—that is all. And she will never tell you her lessons in advance—never! She will never tell you why you are hurt; you must find that out for yourself. She will give you power,—but never will she give you what you ask for. She invites men to pleasure, and in the same moment terrifies them with death; therefore men refuse to understand, and imagine that nature is kind only to the wicked. What people sometimes imagine to be wicked, is not, however, at all wicked according to nature's laws. We see persons successful whom we know to be not moral in the common acceptance of the word. But these men must be nature's "best-endowed," otherwise they would not succeed. Then again what does all this mean?

The meaning is this: the real purpose of nature is to force man to develop himself until he reaches the divine condition. The first step in self-development is the conquest of the animal-self, the passions which man shares with inferior creatures. Now you will see the meaning of the poem more plainly. In order to make her selection, nature offers men the strongest temptation to the indulgence of these very passions. Those who yield to the temptations are destroyed from the face of the earth; those who resist the temptations, even for cunning and for selfish reasons, are

spared. For these are the strong ones, in whom intelligence can master appetite. That is why we often find successful evil in this world. The evil people who greatly succeed are never altogether evil. They have at least learned to master their passions;—that is the first requisite for success. Once men have acquired the power to conquer the animal part of themselves, the second stage of development is possible, intelligent morality—morality not based on superstitious ideas, or traditional ideas, or self-seeking motives of any kind, but morality as inherent feeling, as natural law.

Do you observe the startling suggestion here? Does Meredith mean to say that the best human beings are not the most moral human beings in the religious sense of the word, but those who have acquired the most complete mastery over themselves? I am afraid that I must say very plainly that this is what he means. The idea may shock some of you. But all new ideas give a shock; and when we examine this one, we shall find that perhaps it is not so very shocking. To be good only for religious reasons may often mean to be good only through fear. To be good only through fear is not to be really good. Nor can we praise justly the morality of a man who is moral only through fear of public opinion, or through fear of the law. There is only one other motive of goodness in the religious sense of the word, —a natural sense of kindness and justice and sympathy. Is that good? Certainly—but Meredith would tell you that it is good only in a limited degree, unless accompanied by intelligence and will. A sheep is a very gentle and sympathetic animal, a dove is a very good bird, but Meredith has told us very plainly in another of his poems that he prefers the lion and the eagle, both of which are creatures of prey, but higher works of nature. Perhaps this sounds very immoral. I do not think so. Meredith's position is that goodness and weakness combined are of less value than force and courage without any goodness at all. And I

imagine that he is right, for this reason—the tendency of all weakness is to destruction and death, no matter how moral it may be. Force without pity, courage without sympathy, may seem to us very horrible,—even diabolical; but the tendency in these cases is to larger life and higher development, and these qualities of strength alone can form the firm foundation for future moral development. It is not enough to be good if you are weak: you must try to be both good and strong. But if humanity has to choose between being good and being strong, then it is better to be strong. The goodness will come later on. But it will never come to the weak. You must remember that Meredith classes the highest form of strength as intellectual strength. Strength of mind, capacity to govern one's passions independently of moral motives, is better than weakness of mind conjoined with the best of moral motives.

Now to return to the text. He tells us that man has up to this time only "half transferred the battle to his brain from bloody ground." This means that man is yet only half master of himself, only half intellectually developed. Paraphrased, the expression would be about thus: So far man has only been able to transfer the real struggle for existence from the physical world of war to the mental world of war. His first battles were with his own kind or wild beasts; his new battle is with himself. It is much harder fighting. But he will never win that victory until he has learned to give up all other forms of struggle. By fighting with himself he will become stronger. At present it is very hard for him to understand this. He is still so selfish that he can see facts only through the medium of his own selfish desires. Therefore he is still comparatively blind. But he will eventually be able to overcome all his selfishness; and then he will see clearly and will understand the mysteries that now trouble him. Then he will understand nature and the divine law, and read all those riddles quite easily which at present cause him so much sorrow and pain.

But that the senses still
Usurp the station of their issue mind,
He would have burst the chrysalis of the blind:
As yet he will;

As yet he will, she prays,
Yet will when his distempered devil of Self;—
The glutton for her fruits, the wily elf
In shifting rays;—

When this Self, described in several verses more, shall become completely purified, the poet suggests—but when will that be? Meredith very plainly says, as Spencer would also say if he could agree with Meredith's metaphysics, never in this world. Never in this world will man become altogether good and strong, never perfect. But that is only because this world will not last long enough. It will be in a future universe that man will become perfect—

When fire has passed him vapour to the sun,
And sun relumed.

After this system shall have returned to its parent sun, planet by planet, and all have been burned, then after the death of that sun himself there will be another sun and other worlds and other moons. I suppose you know that this is mathematically certain. There is no doubt at all as to the astronomical history of the present universe, as to the certainty of its dissolution; neither is there any doubt that by reason of the recognised laws of matter and force another universe will be evolved out of the very same substance. We know the history of matter. But the question of the continuance of human tendencies, moral tendencies, after the destruction of the universe, can only be discussed by persons having a certain amount of faith. The great mathematicians would probably remain silent on this subject. Meredith has the faith required for the grand hypothesis. He considers that mind goes through the same

form of cosmic evolution as matter,—that, indeed, the two are inseparable (there he accords with Spencer); and that all the tendencies and impulses of the present existence will have their results in another existence. Mankind can complete only a part of its evolution upon this planet; the rest will be accomplished upon other planets, and throughout all time, till man becomes divine.

So you see that Meredith is a very strong believer in the moral order of the universe, and that his attempt to apply the philosophy of evolution to ethics is well worthy of study. But I must warn you that unless you understand his moral position very clearly, you might easily misjudge him, especially in regard to this insistence upon the union of strength with goodness. Persons who worship only force might easily twist some of his teachings into a false direction. I imagine that the true direction of his thinking is not far from that of a great Arabic teacher, who, when asked by one of his pupils to define what was right and what was wrong in a few words, boldly answered,—"Do as you please in this world—only be careful that nothing which you do can cause any pain or any injury to your fellow man." Deeply considered, this is the essence of all religious teachings; and the ideal humanity of Meredith's hope would probably have no fault to find with it.

CHAPTER XXIV

"THE SHAVING OF SHAGPAT"

I HAVE spoken to you a great deal about the poetry of George Meredith, but I have not yet found an opportunity to tell you about his having written what I believe to be one of the greatest fables—certainly the greatest fable imagined during the nineteenth century. I imagine also that this fable will live, will even become a great classic,—after all his novels have been forgotten. For his novels, great as they are, deal almost entirely with contemporary pictures of highly complicated English and Italian aristocratic society. They picture the mental and moral fashions of a generation, and all such fashions quickly change. But the great fable pictures something which is, which has been, and which always will be in human nature; it touches the key of eternal things, just as his poetry does—perhaps even better; for some of his poetry is terribly obscure. Mr. Gosse has written a charming essay upon the fable of which I am going to speak to you; but neither Mr. Gosse nor anybody else has ever attempted to explain it. If the book is less well known, less widely appreciated than it deserves, the fact is partly owing to the want of critical interpretation. Even to Mr. Gosse the book makes its appeal chiefly as a unique piece of literary art. But how many people in conservative England either care for literary art in itself, or are capable of estimating it? So long as people think that such or such a book is only a fairy tale, they do not trouble themselves much to read it. But prove to them that the fairy tale is the emblem of a great moral fact, then it is different. The wonderful stories of Andersen owe their popularity as

much to the fact that they teach moral fact, as to the fact that they please children.

Meredith's book was not written to please children; there is perhaps too much love-making in it for that. I do not even know whether it was written for a particular purpose; I am inclined to think that there was no particular purpose. Books written with a purpose generally fail. Great moral stories are stories that have been written for art's sake. Meredith took for model the manner of the Arabian story tellers. The language, the comparisons, the poetry, the whole structure of his story is in the style of the Arabian Nights. But as Mr. Gosse observes, the Arabian Nights seem to us cold and pale beside it. You can not find in the Arabian Nights a single page to compare with certain pages of "The Shaving of Shagpat"; and this is all the more extraordinary because the English book is written in a tone of extravagant humour. You feel that the author is playing with the subject, as a juggler plays with half a dozen balls at the same time, never letting one of them fall. And yet he has done much better than the Orientals who took their subject seriously. Even the title, the names of places or of persons, are jokes,—though they look very much like Arabian or Persian names. "Shagpat" is only the abbreviation of "shaggy pate," "pate" being an old English word for head—so that the name means a very hairy and rough looking head. When you begin to see jokes of this kind even in the names, you may be inclined to think that the book is trifling. I thought so myself before reading it; but now that I have read it at least half a dozen times, and hope to read it many times more, I can assure you that it is one of the most delightful books ever written, and that it can not fail to please you. With this introduction, I shall now begin to say something about the story itself, the fantastic plot of it.

Who is Shagpat? Shagpat is a clothing merchant and the favourite of a king. Shagpat wears his hair very long,

contrary to the custom of Mohammedan countries, where all men shave their heads, with the exception of one tuft on the top of the head, by which tuft, after death, the true believer is to be lifted up by angels, and carried into Paradise. Mohammedans are as careful about this tuft as the Chinese are careful about their queues. How comes it that in a Mohammedan city a true believer should thus wear his hair long? It is because in his head there has been planted one magical hair taken out of the head of a Djinn of Genie; and this hair, called the Identical, has the power to make all men worship the person on whose head it grows. Therefore it is that the king reverences this clothing merchant, and that all the people bow down before him. Also an order is given that all men in that country must wear their hair long in the same manner, and that no barbers are to be allowed to exercise their trade in any of the cities.

A barber, not knowing these regulations,—a barber of the name of Shibli Bagarag—comes to the principal city and actually proposes to shave Shagpat. He is at once seized by slaves, severely beaten, and banished from the city. But outside the city he meets a horrible old woman, so ugly that it pains him to look at her; and she tells him that she can make his fortune for him if he will promise to marry her. Although he is in a very unhappy condition, the idea of marrying so hideous a woman terrifies him; nevertheless he plucks up courage and promises. She asks him then to kiss her. He has to shut his eyes before he can do that, but after he has done it she suddenly becomes young and handsome. She is the daughter of the chief minister of the king, and she is ugly only because of an enchantment cast upon her. This enchantment has been caused by the power of Shagpat, who desired to marry her. For her own sake and for the sake of the country and for the sake of all the people, she says that it is necessary that the head of Shagpat should be shaved. But to shave Shagpat requires extraordinary powers—magical powers. For the magical hair

in that man's head can not be cut by any ordinary instrument. If approached with a knife or a razor, this hair suddendly develops tremendous power as of an electric shock, hurling far away all who approach it. It is only a hair to all appearances at ordinary times, but at extraordinary times it becomes luminous, and stands up like a pillar of fire reaching to the stars. And the daughter of the minister tells Bagarag that if he has courage she can teach him the magic that shall help him to cut that hair,—to shave the shaggy pate of Shagpat.

I have gone into details this far only to give you a general idea of the plan of the story. The greater part of the book deals with the obstacles and dangers of Shagpat, and recounts, in the most wonderful way, the struggle between the powers of magic used on both sides. For Shagpat is defended against barbers by evil spirits who use black magic; while Bagarag is assisted by his wife, and her knowledge of white magic. In his embraces she has become the most beautiful woman in the world, and the more he loves her the more beautiful she becomes. But he is given to understand that he must lose her if his courage fails in the fight against Shagpat. To tell you here how his courage is tested, and how he triumphs over all tests, would only spoil your pleasure in the story when you come to read it. Here I shall only say that the grandest chapter in the part of the book recounting Bagarag's adventures is the chapter on the Sword of Aklis, the magical sword with which the head of Shagpat at last is shaved. The imagining of this sword is one of the most wonderful things in any literature; for all the ancient descriptions of magical swords are dull and uninteresting compared with the description of the sword of Aklis. It can only be looked at by very strong eyes, so bright it is; it can be used as a bridge from earth to sky; it can be made so long that in order to use it one must look through a telescope; it can be made lighter than a moon beam, or so heavy that no strength could lift it. I want

to quote to you a few sentences of the description of the sword, because this description is very beautiful, and it will give you a good idea of Meredith's coloured prose style. The passages which I am going to read describe the first appearance of the sword to Bagarag, after he has washed his eyes with magical water:

> His sight was strengthened to mark the glory of the Sword, where it hangs in slings, a little way from the wall. . . . Lo! the length of it was as the length of crimson across the sea when the sun is sideways on the wave, and it seemed full a mile long, the whole blade sheening like an arrested lightning from the end to the hilt; the hilt two large live serpents twined together, with eyes like sombre jewels, and sparkling spotted skins, points of fire in their folds, and reflections of the emerald and topaz and ruby stones, studded in the blood-stained haft. Then the seven young men, sons of Aklis, said to Shibli Bagarag, . . . "Grasp the handle of the sword!"
>
> Now, he beheld the sword and the ripples of violet heat that were breathing down it, and those two venomous serpents twining together, and the size of it, its ponderousness; and to essay lifting it appeared to him a madness, but he concealed his thought, and . . . went forward to it boldly, and piercing his right arm between the twists of the serpents, grasped the jeweled haft. Surely, the sword moved from the slings as if a giant had swayed it! But what amazed him was the marvel of the blade, for its sharpness was such that nothing stood in its way, and it slipped through everything, as we pass through still water,—the stone columns, blocks of granite by the walls, the walls of earth, and the thick solidity of the ground beneath his feet. They bade him say to the Sword, "Sleep"! and it was no longer than a knife in the girdle. Likewise, they bade him hiss on the heads of the serpents, and say, "Wake"! and while he held it lengthwise it shot lengthening out.

In fact, it lengthens across the world, if the owner so desires, to kill an enemy thousands of miles away. With this wonderful sword at last Shagpat is shaved. But notwithstanding the power of thousands of good spirits who help the work, and the white magic of the beautiful Noorna, the shaving is an awfully difficult thing to do. The chapter

describing it reads as magnificently as the description of the Judgment Day, and you will wonder at the splendour of it.

What does all this mean, you may well ask. What is the magical hair? What is the sword? What is every impossible thing recounted in this romance? Really the author himself gives us the clue, and therefore his meaning ought to have been long ago clearly perceived. At the end of the story is this clue, furnished by the words—

> The Sons of Aklis were now released from the toil of sharpening of the sword a half-cycle of years, to wander in delight on the fair surface of the flowery earth, breathing its roses, wooing its brides; for the mastery of an event lasteth among men the space of one cycle of years, and after that a fresh illusion springeth to befool mankind, and the Seven must expend the concluding half-cycle in preparing the edge of the Sword for a new mastery.

From this it is quite evident to anybody who has read the book that the sword of Aklis is the sword of science,—the power of exact scientific knowledge, wielded against error, superstition, humbug, and convention of every injurious kind.

Do not, however, imagine that this bit of interpretation interprets all the story; you must read it more than once, and think about it a great deal, in order to perceive the application of its thousand incidents to real human nature.

When Bagarag first, in his ignorance, offers to shave Shagpat, he has no idea whatever of the powers arrayed against him. What he wants is not at all in itself wrong; on the contrary it is in itself quite right. But what is quite right in one set of social conditions may seem to be quite wrong in another. Therefore the poor fellow is astonished to discover that the whole nation is against him, that the king is particularly offended with him, that all public opinion condemns him, would refuse him even the right to live in its midst. Is not Bagarag really the discoverer, the scientific man, the philosopher with a great desire to benefit other men, discovering that his kind wish arouses against him the

laws of the government, the anger of religions, and all the prejudice of public opinion? Bagarag is the reformer who is not allowed to reform anything,—threatened with death if he persists. Reformers must be men of courage, and Bagarag has courage. But courage is not enough to sustain the purpose of the philosopher, the reformer, the man with new ethical or other truth to tell mankind. Much more than courage is wanted—power. How is power to come? You remember about the horrible old woman who asks Bagarag to kiss her, and when he kisses her she becomes young and divinely beautiful. We may suppose that Noorna really represents Science. Scientific study seems very ugly, very difficult, very repellent at first sight, but if you have the courage and the capacity to master it, if you can bravely kiss it, as Bagarag kissed the old woman, it becomes the most delightful mistress; nor is that all—it finds strange powers and forces for you. It can find for you even a sword of Aklis.

Now certain subjects are supposed to be beneath the dignity of literary art; and some of the subjects in this extraordinary book might appear to you too trivial for genius to busy itself with. The use of a barber as hero is not at all inartistic; it is in strict accordance with the methods of the Arabian story-tellers to make barbers, fishermen, water-carriers, and other men of humble occupations, the leading characters in a tale. But that the whole plot of the narrative should turn upon the difficulty of cutting one hair; and that this single hair should be given so great an importance in the history—this might very well seem to you beneath the dignity of art—that is, until you read the book. Yet the manner in which the fancy is worked out thoroughly excuses such triviality. The symbol of the hair is excellent. What is of less seeming importance than a hair? What is so frail and light and worthless as a hair? Now to many reformers and teachers the errors, social, moral, or religious, which they wish to destroy really appear to have less value,

less resistance than a hair. But, as a great scientific teacher observed a few years ago, no man is able to conceive the strength in error, the force of error, the power of prejudice, until he has tried to attack it. Then all at once the illusion, the lie, that seems frail as a hair, and even of less worth, suddenly reveals itself as a terrible thing, reaching from Earth to Sky, radiating electricity and lightning in every direction. Observe in the course of modern European history what an enormous effort has been required to destroy even very evident errors, injustices, or illusions. Think of the hundreds of years of sturdy endeavour which we needed before even a partial degree of religious freedom could be obtained. Think of the astonishing fact that one hundred years ago the man risked his life who found the courage to say that witchcraft was an illusion. One might mention thousands of illustrations of the same truth. No intellectual progress can be effected within conservative countries by mere discovery, mere revelation of facts, nor by logic, nor by eloquence, nor even by individual courage. The discovery is ridiculed; the facts are denied; the logic is attacked; the eloquence is met by greater eloquence on the side of untruth; the individual courage is astounded, if not defeated, by the armies of the enemies summoned against it. Progress, educational or otherwise, means hard fighting, not for one lifetime only but for generations. You are well aware how many generations have elapsed since the educational system of the Middle Ages was acknowledged by all men of real intelligence as inadequate to produce great results. One would have thought that the mediæval fetish would have been thrown away in the nineteenth century, at least. But it is positively true that in most English speaking universities, even at the present time, a great deal of the machinery of mediæval education remains, and there is scarcely any hope of having it removed even within another hundred years. If you asked the wise men of those universities what is the use of pre-

serving certain forms of study and certain formalities of practice that can only serve to increase the obstacles to educational progress, they would answer you truthfully that it is of no use at all, but they would also tell you something about the difficulty that would attend any attempted change; and you would be astonished to learn the extent and the immensity of those difficulties.

Now you will perceive that the single hair in our study actually represents, perhaps, better than any more important object could do, the real story of any social illusion, any great popular error. The error seems so utterly absurd that you can not understand how any man in his senses can believe it, and yet men quite as intelligent as yourselves, perhaps even more so, speak of it with respect. They speak of it with respect simply because they perceive better than you do what enormous power would be needed to destroy it. It appears to you something so light that even a breath would blow it away forever, or the touch of pain break it so easily that the breaking could not even be felt. You think of wisdom crushing it as an elephant might crush a fly, without knowing that the fly was there. But when you come to put forth your strength against this error, this gossamer of illusion, you will find that you might as well try to move a mountain with your hand. You must have help: you must have friends to furnish you with the sword of Aklis. Even with that mighty sword the cutting of the hair will prove no easy job.

Afterwards what happens? Why, exactly the same thing that happens before. Men think that because the world has made one step forward in their time, all illusions are presently going to fade away. This is the greatest of social mistakes that a human being can possibly make. The great sea of error immediately closes again behind the forms that find strength to break out of it. It is just the same as before. One illusion may indeed be eventually destroyed, but another illusion quickly forms behind it. The real

truth is that wisdom will be reached when human individuals as well as human society shall have become infinitely more perfect than they now are; and such perfection can scarcely be brought about before another million of years at least.

These are the main truths symbolised in this wonderful story. But while you are reading the "Shaving of Shagpat," you need not consider the moral meanings at all. You will think of them better after the reading. Indeed, I imagine that the story will so interest you that you will not be able to think of anything else until you have reached the end of it. Then you find yourself sorry that it is not just a little bit longer.

CHAPTER XXV

LITERATURE AND POLITICAL OPINION

It has been for some time my purpose to deliver a little lecture illustrating the possible relation between literature and politics—subjects that seem as much opposed to each other as any two subjects could be, yet most intimately related. You know that I have often expressed the hope that some of you will be among those who make the future literature of Japan, the literature of the coming generation; and in this connection, I should like to say that I think the creation of Japanese literature (and by literature I mean especially fiction and poetry) to be a political necessity. If "political necessity" seems to you too strong a term, I shall say national requirement; but before I reach the end of this lecture, I think you will acknowledge that I used the words "political necessity" in a strictly correct sense.

In order to explain very clearly what I mean, I must first ask you to think about the meaning of public opinion in national politics. Perhaps in Japan to-day public opinion may not seem to you of paramount importance in deciding matters of statecraft, though you will acknowledge that it is a force which statesmen have, and must always have, to deal with. But in western countries, where the social conditions are very different, and where the middle classes represent the money power of the nation, public opinion may mean almost everything. I need scarcely tell you that the greatest force in England is public opinion—that is to say, the general national opinion, or rather feeling, upon any subject of moment. Sometimes this opinion may be wrong, but right or wrong is not here the question. It is the power that decides for or against war; it is the power

that decides for or against reform; it is the power that to a very great degree influences English foreign policy. The same may be said regarding public opinion in France. And although Germany is, next to Russia, the most imperial of European powers, and possesses the most tremendous military force that the world has even seen, public opinion there also is still a great power in politics. But most of all, America offers the example of public opinion as government. There indeed the sentiment of the nation may be said to decide almost every question of great importance, whether domestic or foreign.

Now the whole force of such opinion in the West depends very much for its character upon knowledge. When people are correctly informed upon a subject, they are likely, in the mass, to think correctly in regard to it. When they are ignorant of the matter, they are of course apt to think wrongly about it. But this is not all. What we do not know is always a cause of uneasiness, of suspicion, or of fear. When a nation thinks or feels suspiciously upon any subject, whether through ignorance or otherwise, its action regarding the subject is tolerably certain to be unjust. Nations, like individuals, have their prejudices, their superstitions, their treacheries, their vices. All these are of course the result of ignorance or of selfishness, or of both together. But perhaps we had better say roundly that all the evil in this world is the result of ignorance, since selfishness itself could not exist but for ignorance. You will also have remarked in your reading of modern history that the more intelligent and educated, that is to say the less ignorant, a nation is, the more likely is its policy in foreign matters to be marked by something resembling justice.

Now how is national feeling created to-day upon remote and foreign subjects? Perhaps some of you will answer, by newspapers—and the remark would contain some truth. But only a little truth; for newspapers do not as a rule treat of other than current events, and the writers of newspapers

themselves can write only out of the knowledge they happen to have regarding foreign and unfamiliar matters. I should say that the newspaper press has more to do with the making of prejudice than with the dissemination of accurate knowledge in regard to such matters, and that at all times its influence can be only of the moment. The real power that shapes opinion in regard to other nations and other civilisations is literature—fiction and poems. What one people in Europe knows about another people is largely obtained, not from serious volumes of statistics, or grave history, or learned books of travel, but from the literature of that people—the literature that is an expression of its emotional life.

Do not think that public opinion in western countries can be made by the teaching of great minds, or by the scholarship of a few. Public opinion, in my meaning, is not an intellectual force at all. It could not possibly be made an intellectual force. It is chiefly emotional, and may be a moral force, but nothing more. Nevertheless, even English ministers of state have to respect it always, and have to obey it very often indeed. And it is largely made, as I have told you, by literature—not the literature of philosophy and of science, but the literature of imagination and of feeling. Only thousands of people can read books of pure science and philosophy; but millions read stories and verses that touch the heart, and through the heart influence the judgment.

I should say that English public feeling regarding many foreign countries has been very largely made by such literature. But I have time only to give you one striking example—the case of Russia. When I was a boy the public knew absolutely nothing about Russia worth knowing, except that the Russian soldiers were very hard fighters. But fighting qualities, much as the English admired them, are to be found even among savages, and English experience with Russian troops did not give any reason for a higher kind of

admiration. Indeed, up to the middle of the present century the Russians were scarcely considered in England as real human kindred. The little that was known of Russian customs and Russian government was not of a kind to correct hostile feeling—quite the contrary. The cruelties of military law, the horrors of Siberian prisons,—these were often spoken of; and you will find even in the early poetry of Tennyson, even in the text of "The Princess," references to Russia of a very grim kind.

All that was soon to be changed. Presently translations into French, into German, and into English, of the great Russian authors began to make their appearance. I believe the first remarkable work of this sort directly translated into English was Tolstoi's "Cossacks," the translator being the American minister at St. Petersburg, Mr. Schuyler. The great French writer Mérimée had already translated some of the best work of Gogol and Pushkin. These books began to excite extraordinary interest. But a much more extraordinary interest was aroused by the subsequent translations of the great novels of Turgueniev, Dostoievsky, and others. Turgueniev especially became a favourite in every cultured circle in Europe. He represented living Russia as it was—the heart of the people, and not only the heart of the people but the feelings and the manners of all classes in the great empire. His books quickly became world-books, nineteenth century classics, the reading of which was considered indispensable for literary culture. After him many other great works of Russian fiction were translated into nearly all the languages of Europe. Nor was this all. The great intellect of Russia, suddenly awakening, had begun to make itself heavily felt in the most profound branches of practical science. The most remarkable discovery of modern times in chemistry, concerning the law of atomic weights, was a Russian discovery; the most remarkable work of physiography accomplished in regard to Northern Asia was the work of Prince Kropotkin, who still lives,

and writes wonderful books and memoirs. I am mentioning only two cases out of hundreds. In medicine, in linguistics, in many other scientific directions, the influence of Russian work and thought is now widely recognised. But however scientific men might find reason to respect the Russian intellect, it is not by intellect that a nation can make itself understood abroad. The great work of making Russia understood was accomplished chiefly by her novelists and story-tellers. After having read those wonderful books, written with a simple strength of which we have no parallel example in western literature, except the works of a few Scandinavian writers, the great nations of the West could no longer think of Russians as a people having no kinship with them. Those books proved that the human heart felt and loved and suffered in Russia just as in England, or France, or Germany; but they also taught something about the peculiar and very great virtues of the Russian people, the Russian masses—their infinite patience, their courage, their loyalty, and their great faith. For, though we could not call these pictures of life beautiful (many of them are very terrible, very cruel), there is much of what is beautiful in human nature to be read between the lines. The gloom of Turgueniev and of his brothers in fiction only serves to make the light seem more beautiful by contrast. And what has been the result? A total change of western feeling towards the Russian people. I do not mean that western opinion has been at all changed as regards the Russian government. Politically Russia remains the nightmare of Europe. But what the people are has been learned, and well learned, through Russian literature; and a general feeling of kindliness and of human sympathy has taken the place of the hatred and dislike that formerly used to tone popular utterances in regard to Russians in general.

Now you will see very clearly what I mean, what I am coming to. Vast and powerful as the Russian nation is, it

has great faults, great deficiencies, such as have not characterized the people of this country for thousands of years. So far as civilisation signifies manners and morals, education and industry, I should certainly say that the Japanese even hundreds of years ago were more civilised as a nation than the Russians of to-day are, than the Russians can be even for a long time to come. Yet what is known in western countries about Japan? Almost nothing. I do not mean that there are not now hundreds of rich people who have seen Japan, and have learned something about it. Thousands of books about Japan have been written by such travellers. But these travellers and writers represent very little; certainly they do not represent national opinion in any way. The great western peoples—the masses of them—know just as little about Japan to-day as was known about Russia at the beginning of this century. They know that Japan can fight well, and she has railroads, and ships of war; and that is about all that has made an impression upon the public mind. The intellectual classes of Europe know a great deal more, but as I have said, these do not make public opinion, which is largely a matter of feeling, not of thinking. National feeling can not be reached through the head; it must be reached through the heart. And there is but one class of men capable of doing this—your own men of letters. Ministers, diplomats, representatives of learned societies—none of these can do it. But a single great novelist, a single great poet, might very well do it. No one foreign in blood and in speech could do it, by any manner of means. It can only be done by Japanese literature, thought by Japanese, written by Japanese, and totally uninfluenced by foreign thinking and foreign feeling.

Let me try to put this truth a little more plainly to you by way of illustration. At present the number of books written by foreigners about Japan reaches many thousands; every year at least a dozen new books appear on the sub-

ject; and nevertheless the western reading public knows nothing about Japan. Nor could it be said that these books have even resulted in lessening the very strong prejudices that western people feel toward all Oriental nations—prejudices partly the result of natural race-feeling, and partly the result of religious feeling. Huxley once observed that no man could imagine the power of religious prejudice until he tried to fight it. As a general rule the men who try to fight against western prejudices in regard to the religions of other peoples, are abused whenever possible, and when not possible, they are either ignored or opposed by all possible means. Even the grand Oxford undertaking of the translations of the sacred books of the eastern races was very strongly denounced in many quarters; and the translators are still accused of making eastern religions seem more noble than they really could be. I mention this fact only as an illustration of one form of prejudice; and there are hundreds of others. At the present time any person who attempts to oppose these, has no chance of being fairly heard. But the general opinion is that any good things said about the civilisation, the ethics, the industry, or the faith of Japan, are said for selfish motives—for reasons of flattery or fear or personal gain; and that the unkind, untruthful, and stupid things said, are said by brave, frank, independent, and very wise people. And why is this? Because the good and bad alike have been said only by foreigners. What any foreigner now says about Japanese life and thought and character will have very little influence on the good side, though it may have considerable influence on the other side. This is inevitable. Moreover, remember that the work done by foreigners in the most appreciative and generous directions has not been of a kind that could reach the western mass of readers. It could reach only small intellectual circles. You can not touch the minds of a great people by mere books of travel, or by essays, or by translations of literature having nothing in

common with western feeling. You can reach them only through more humane literature, fiction and poetry, novels and stories. If only foreigners had written about Russia, the English people would still think of the Russian upper classes as barbarians, and would scarcely think of the great nation itself as being humanly related to them. All prejudices are due to ignorance; ignorance can be dissipated best by appeals to the nobler emotions. And the nobler emotions are best inspired by pure literature.

I should suppose that more than one of you would feel inclined to ask, "What need we care about the prejudices and the stupidities of ignorant people in western countries?" Well, I have already told you that at the present time these relatively ignorant and stupid millions have a great deal to do with state-policy. It is the opinion of the ignorant, much more than the opinion of the wise, that regulates the policy of western governments with foreign nations. That would be a good reason of itself. But I will now go further, and say that I think the absence of a modern Japanese literature, such as I am advocating, is indirectly to be regretted also for commercial reasons. It is quite true that commerce and trade are not exactly moral occupations; they are conducted according to relative morality, perhaps, not according to positive morality. In short, business is not moral. It is a kind of competition; and all competitions are in the nature of war. But in this war, which is necessary, and which can not be escaped, a very great deal depends upon the feelings with which the antagonists regard each other. A very great deal depends upon sympathy, even in business, upon an understanding of the simplest feelings regarding right and wrong, pleasure and pain; for, at bottom, all human interests are based upon these. I am quite certain that a Japanese literature capable of creating sympathy abroad would have a marked effect in ameliorating business conditions and in expanding commercial possibilities. The great mass of business is

risk. Now men are more or less in the position of enemies, when they have to risk without perfect knowledge of all the conditions upon the other side. In short, people are afraid of what they do not understand. And there is no way by which the understanding could be so quickly imparted as through the labours of earnest men of letters. I might mention in this connection that I have seen lately letters written by merchants in a foreign country, asking for information in regard to conditions in this country, which proved the writers to know even less about Japan than they know about the moon. In ten years, two or three —nay, even one great book—would have the effect of educating whole business circles, whole millions of people in regard to what is true and good in this country.

Now I have put these thoughts before you in the roughest and simplest way possible, not because I think that they represent a complete argument on the subject, but because I trust they contain something which will provoke you to think very seriously about the matter. A man may do quite as great a service to his country by writing a book as by winning a battle. And you had proof of this fact the other day, when a young English writer fell sick, with the result that all over the world the cables were set in motion to express to him the sympathy of millions and millions of people, while kings and emperors asked about his health. What had this young man done? Nothing except to write a few short stories and a few little songs that made all Englishmen understand each other's heart better than before, and that had made other nations better understand the English. Such a man is really worth to his country more than a king. If you will remember this, I believe the lecture I have given will bear good fruit at some future day.

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